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THE NEW

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The Week-end Review

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THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION—The Week-end Review. *Incorporating The New Statesman, The Nation and Athenaeum, Week-end Review.*

AT Stresa two Great Powers which have made up their minds to organise the Continent of Europe for defence against Germany will confront a British Government which is still "exploring." Sir John Simon's statement, which seems to mean that the Cabinet is still sunk in contemplation of the "consequences of the consequences" of any decision, raises the doubt whether such a Government can exert any effective influence on Paris and Rome. For without a hypothetical decision even bargaining is impossible. Downing Street ought at least to know on what terms, if any, it will join the new continental system that is forming under its eyes. If to this extent its mind were made up, it ought to be using all the resources of argument and publicity at its disposal. A negative attitude is impossible, for the situation will not stand still. The decisions taken by Paris and Moscow to create what is virtually a Franco-Russian alliance within the League have already transformed the League itself and the assumptions that led to the Locarno Treaty. There is evidence in the French press of extreme irritation, but opinion in this country is on the whole behind the Government in so far as it declines to take the German violation of the Versailles Treaty in a spirit of high tragedy. The tragedy is the return to international anarchy.

The Nazis in Danzig

Ever since their victory in the Saar the more violent and "radical" Nazis have grown in strength in the Party. In the hope of another similar triumph they forced an election in Danzig against the wishes of the other Parties. Their success would have added another desperate complication to Europe's problems. A two-thirds majority would have entitled them (subject to the League's consent) to make constitutional changes, and they would certainly have attempted to sweep away all minority rights and destroy all opposition groups. The plan miscarried. They increased their vote but failed to get the necessary two-thirds majority—a set-back about which the German press does not disguise its disappointment, but which is heralded as a great triumph for Hitler in the still more pro-Nazi Rothermere press. The usual terrorist tactics were in full swing, but the Social Democrats and Catholics retained their electoral strength almost unimpaired. In Danzig there are still nearly 40 per cent. of good Germans who give the lie to the claim of Goebbels that to be a German it is also necessary to be a National Socialist. Nazi tactics are sufficiently illustrated by the case of Dr. Rauschning, who was Nazi President of Danzig until last November, but who has now been compelled by threats to leave the country. He is accused of being a traitor who wishes to betray his country to the Jews. He explains in a dignified reply that as President he could do no less than his best to safeguard the rights of Jewish as of other citizens.

The Schutzbund Trial

The evidence at the trial of the twenty-one Schutzbund leaders in Vienna shows that justice demanded not a criminal charge but an apology and handsome compensation for these men. They planned throughout to defend the democratic and republican constitution which the Heimwehr Fascists destroyed. They made no fewer than seventeen offers to disarm the Schutzbund if the Government would secure the disarmament of the Heimwehr. The Government always refused, although Great Britain and other Western Powers constantly urged general internal disarmament in compliance with the Treaties. The trial shows that the Austrian Government connived at the original armament of the Schutzbund in order to cheat the Entente; that it tolerated the Heimwehr *putsch* of 1931, and that only the vigilance of the Schutzbund obliged it to persuade the *putschists* to calm down; that thereafter every effort of the Schutzbund and Socialists to come to terms with the Clericals was defeated by the latter up till February, 1934, when Dr. Dollfuss gave *carte blanche* to the Heimwehr to destroy democratic Austria. The Schutzbund chose to go down fighting. The key throughout was Italian money. Mere expediency should have warned Dr. Schuschnigg off this trial. He has recently complained that he got nothing out of his last uninvited visit to London but the advice "to be kind to the Socialists." We wish the advice had been more strongly pressed. The hated Mussolini-Schuschnigg-Starhemberg regime is destroying the last hopes of a return to democracy in Austria and indirectly doing Hitler's propaganda in Austria for him.

The U.S.A. and War Profits

The United States House of Representatives has now passed the McSwain Bill for "taking the profits out of war," after deleting the clause providing for general conscription of men between 21 and 45, on the ground that this might have legalised forced labour in industry. The McSwain Bill will now go to the Senate which is preparing a Bill of its own arising out of the inquiry into the trade in armaments. The War Department appears to be taking alarm at these activities, and is urging that taxation should not be pushed to lengths that would discourage the production of war materials. Whether anything will come of the agitation against the war-mongers it is still much too soon to say. Very likely nothing will; for Congress is far behindhand with its legislative programme, the only important measure so far passed being the Work-Relief Bill. The President is now back from his holiday; and he will presumably make a greater effort to speed things up during the next few weeks, though, with the Work-Relief Bill in force at last, he can go ahead with the greater part of his programme without awaiting further leave from Congress. Especially he can go ahead with housing, which offers the best hope of stimulating the still prostrate constructional trades, and can relieve by federal expenditure the growingly desperate financial position of the various local relief agencies. Before he gets the rest of his Bills through Congress, Mr. Roosevelt will probably have to face a considerable struggle. But there is nothing now to hold up the continuance of the existing policy, except in the case of the N.R.A., about which he has probably ceased to care.

The I.C.S.

Mr. Churchill grossly overstated his case when he used the alleged discontent of the Indian Civil Service as a weapon with which to assail the whole India Bill. Some discontent, however, there is and it availed to draw Sir Samuel Hoare's consent to a most questionable amendment. The fact seems to be that five members of the executive of the Bengal Civil Service Association circularised a critical memorandum among its members with the curious announcement that silence would imply consent. Six individuals dissented, the rest were silent, but whether in assent or contempt who shall say? Thanks to this hint of discontent and to some speeches from "loyal" Conservatives, the hands of future Indian Governments are now more tightly bound than ever in dealing with the Civil Service. Not only are the interests of all present members secured, but it is now laid down that changes affecting the interests of those who enter in the future can be brought about only by an Act of Parliament. In other words, Westminster fixes the remuneration of future Civil servants, but Delhi pays the bill. Subsequently the Labour Party tried but failed to remove one of the meanest of the minor tributes laid on the Indian people. The cost of Christian chaplains who serve not merely soldiers but civilians also is actually imposed on Hindu and Mohammedan taxpayers. Not only so, but this establishment is a reserved subject, which the elected legislature may not touch. Imperialism is subject to curious lapses of dignity.

The Unemployed

The March unemployment figures are substantially better than those of the two previous months. The improvement is fairly well spread over the leading industries; but by far the largest advance in employment is again in the building industry, with the distributive trades a good second. The increase in building activity is, of course, largely seasonal; and over industry as a whole the increase in employment is a good deal less than it was this time last year. The figures show that, even if the pace of recovery has been substantially slowed down, the general movement is still slowly upward. The fears of a positive recession this spring have not so far been realised. The number of insured workers employed has risen by nearly 800,000 over the past two years, or over the past four—for the level of employment was about the same in the spring of 1931 and 1933. But the number of registered unemployed is only 430,000 less than in March, 1931, and 620,000 less than in March, 1933; for the numbers seeking employment have continuously risen. There are still 2,154,000 registered as out of work; and the pace of re-employment is definitely slower than it was a few months ago. As compared with a year ago there are more women and more juveniles out of work—the latter a consequence of the large number of new entrants to industry or, in other words, of the high post-war birth-rate of 1920.

Sugar Beet

The majority report of the Committee of Inquiry would spell the instant end of the sugar-beet subsidies under any government capable of making a decision. Some £30,000,000 have been squandered on an industry

which, on the facts collected in this document, can never become self-supporting. The case for the subsidy is that it is a form of poor-relief to a depressed occupation. But the labour it employs, whether on the farm or in the factory, is chiefly casual. This uneconomic crop, however, tends to become the pivot of any system of farming that relies upon it. It is obvious that alternative schemes, much more far-reaching, for the development of agriculture on less unnatural lines, could be financed at much less cost. The committee suggests no alternative form of aid, and one regrets that it has offered suggestions for the better organisation of the sugar-beet industry on the assumption that the subsidy is continued. That, after this decisive condemnation of waste, should be unthinkable.

The Plight of Wales

The influential Welsh deputation which called on the Prime Minister this week got a bucket of verbal sympathy, but not much else. The purpose of the deputation was to impress on the Government the effects of prolonged economic prostration in bringing about a sheer deterioration of physique and character in the depressed areas, in breaking up the established cultures and ways of life, and in leading to a mood of angry desperation and hatred. The Prime Minister said he knew all that, and the Government knew it. He went on to speak of what was being done by philanthropic agencies, by the Special Commissioner for the depressed areas, and so on. But he held out no real hope that the Government is prepared even to consider larger measures of reclamation. Great things were said about the hopes of land settlement; but the exposition of policy given by the Land Settlement Association at a meeting in the House of Commons on the same day showed that settlement is to be for the present on a purely experimental basis, and on a tiny scale. Justifiable caution, no doubt. But if there is no prospect of successfully settling more than an infinitesimally small portion of the workless on the land, it becomes all the more necessary to consider other measures, such as the location of new industries in the South Wales area and, by way of temporary help, the cleaning up of the filthy mess which a derelict industrialism has left scattered about the once beautiful South Wales valleys. A Commissioner with real powers to develop South Wales could work wonders. But he would have to have the power to interfere with the sacred rights of private property.

Towards Regional Government?

The North-East Coast is by no means the only area in which there is need for drastic alterations in local government boundaries, if these are to be brought into reasonable conformity with modern needs. But there is something to be said for making an experimental start by tackling the problem in a single area, and then going on to deal with others in the light of the experience thus acquired. Under modern conditions, a great many of the functions of local government obviously need co-ordinated control over areas a good deal wider than those of our existing urban authorities; and this question becomes most pressing of all in the distressed areas, where burdens and resources are most unequally shared between the neighbouring authorities. In London, it became necessary a long time ago to institute some measure of community in dealing with the problems of poor relief; and for this purpose Tyneside ought obviously to be treated as a single unit. Apart from this, housing and many other local services would clearly be much better planned and administered by a common regional authority than by a number of separate bodies each dealing with only a fraction of what is essentially a single area. The case of Merthyr is different; for here the question raised at present is only whether Merthyr shall be deprived, on the score of poverty, of its status as a County Borough, and merged in the county for general purposes of administration. But really the problem is far wider than this; for in South Wales, more than anywhere else, there is need for a unified regional body to plan and control the development and reorganisation of the entire area. The Tyneside Commission seems to be on the right lines: the Merthyr Commission is not.

Giving Them Plenty

Adolph Ochs, of the *New York Times*, whose death occurred last Monday, built up a great property by a policy which must seem curious to those who regard Americans as "peppy," hustling, impatient people. He produced an enormous paper and was more insistent on printing everything printable than on cutting and trimming in the English manner. The serious American Press is far more verbose and far less "sub-edited" than our own. Only a leisurely people, prepared to read a budget instead of glancing at a sheet, would have supported the immensity of the *New York Times*. His policy paid, for the Americans, although they love to regard themselves as hustlers, are diligent readers, enamoured of length. An American paper once boasted that its Sunday edition contained "more reading-matter than the whole New Testament." Ochs realised the hearty appetite: he gave his readers plenty and he gave it good. The risks he took were financial, rather than intellectual. He served his public with huge cuts from caution's joint.

Technique of Jubilation

The streets of central London are now being covered with the skeletons of the Jubilee stands. The seats will cost their occupants as dearly in patience as in money, for Lord Trenchard is determined to have sightseers in their places at least two hours before anything happens. And now the cry goes up from the *Daily Express* and elsewhere that not enough will happen. Ten landaus and no foreign royalties! It is true that the Royal Procession will be quite a small one compared with the vast appanage of the Victorian celebrations. But this Jubilee is a long-term festival. The Victorian idea was to have one tremendous show and be done with it; the Georgian technique favours less at a time spread over a much longer period. It is domestic, with Imperial trimmings. Jubilee day is only the prelude to Jubilee summer, with royal drives through various parts of London spaced out through the following weeks. The electricity concerns should do well for flood-lighting will be general and prolonged. Few people are too old to enjoy a bonfire, and bonfires will blaze on all the old beacon sites. The loyal purveyors of indoor amusements will hope for a fine day—and a wet night.

All MSS. and letters should be addressed to the Editor, at 10 *Great Turnstile, High Holborn, London, W.C.*1. *The postage on this issue is: Inland,* 1*d.; Foreign,* 1½*d.; Canada,* 1*d.*

QUESTIONS FOR STRESA

ONE fact stands out from the diplomatic explorations of recent weeks. Europe has been rediscovered. Up to last month Downing Street clung to the traditional hypothesis that British policy can work on a system of limited liability confined to the West. Pitt saw our frontier on the Scheldt: Mr. Baldwin had pushed it back no further than the Rhine. The Locarno Treaty outlined the only effective contribution we were prepared to make to a system of collective security. As recently as last month the proposal of a Western Air Pact showed that official thinking was still moving in these hereditary ruts.

How the prolonged and hesitating explorations of the National Government will end, we do not know. It reaches conclusions with difficulty. To the world at large, however, it is already clear that the basis of any Western system is shattered, and the policy built upon it obsolete. The range of modern aircraft, if nothing else, destroyed it, so soon as Germany, facing East as well as West, emerged once more in her central situation as the greatest single military Power of Europe. One might have hesitated, so long as Franco-Russian relations were undefined. No room for doubt remains after the decisive doings of this week. These two Powers at the extremities of the Continent are now linked once more, across the bulk of Germany, in an avowed defensive commitment. That it differs in form from old-world alliances and fits the framework of the League, alters nothing in its effects. The Western region, to which Downing Street sought to limit its obligations, has lost its boundaries. If ever a German army crosses "our" frontier on the Rhine, if ever General Göring's bombers fly over Paris, the occasion is almost as likely to be a Russo-German as a Franco-German quarrel. The solidarity of East and West is again as close in 1935 as it was in 1914. The mobilisation of Russia and Germany against each other compelled Sir Edward Grey to recollect that he had a strategic responsibility for the naval defence of the French coast-line. The same contingency, given Locarno with the proposed aerial addition, would compel Sir John Simon to guard the skies over Paris. In such an event League procedure could be only a retrospective post-mortem on peace.

The choice, then, that confronts British policy is sharper than it was a month ago. No half-way house, no cautious Western compromise is open to it. A European system has come into being while Mr. Eden navigated the clouds. Not all the documents are signed—some details are still uncertain; there will be more or less of Geneva in it, according as M. Laval or Signor Mussolini proves himself the adroiter architect. The system will mean this at least: that under the name of League sanctions, France, Russia, Italy and the Little Entente will be ranged together for mutual defence. There may be some geographical sub-groups, but this will mean little in practice, since the aggressor whom they have in view is unlikely to challenge this formidable coalition, until he too has backers in more than one region. To speculate on what might happen if ever the trial of strength began is premature. What concerns us now is to define our attitude towards a group of Powers which must act together in peace, if it means to preserve a united front in war. Defensive arrangements are apt to colour all the relationships of armed States—their loans, their armaments, their view of current diplomatic questions. They stand side by side, as the Kaiser once put it, "in shining armour." They must support each other. Not for them the luxury of impartiality. If arming goes on without an agreed upward limit, and if the Nazis attempt by propaganda and plotting to detach hesitating members, the life of Europe under this system will be nasty, brutish and probably short.

Few would propose that our country should join this system, if it were presented to us with Italian "realism" as a super-alliance designed to encircle Germany. The French, however, will be capable of stating its principles in Genevan language, and given their conception of the League they will do so with a measure of sincerity. This, they may say with truth, is no automatic alliance. It is subject to League procedure, and its obligations come into force, only if and when all its expedients for the peaceful settlement of disputes have failed. It is open to Germany at any time to enter it, and to enjoy security on equal terms. This is a plausible justification, but before any British Government yielded to this reasoning, it would presumably wish to satisfy itself by raising some vital preliminary questions. It is easy to say that Germany can return to the League, but the French know as well as we do the condition to which her return is subject. "Equal rights" is in principle a perfectly proper condition. Now, at a time when Hitler's conception of his military requirements was much more modest than it is to-day, the French under M. Barthou refused to negotiate. Is M. Laval ready, after the raising of Hitler's terms, for a negotiation that might give a reasonable interpretation to equality? Unless there is this prospect, it is hardly honest to claim that the doors of the League stand open.

So far the choice is clear enough. Very much more bluntly and earnestly than ever before, the British Government ought to say that its support for any European system that claims the blessing of the League will be dependent on the honest realisation of military equality. Without this, no agreed limitation or reduction of armaments is possible, and without limitation peace is past hoping for. The next difficulty concerns the commitments that would be exacted from Germany, if she should come in. May she enter on the rather negative basis she proposes? Is it enough that she should promise to abstain from committing or aiding aggression? Or must she pledge herself to render military aid to a threatened neighbour, whether on her Eastern or on her Western flank? To exact this from her seems difficult, when one recollects that so far such obligations have existed only on paper.

But Hitler means more by "equal rights" than military equality. He illustrated his meaning by pointing to the Versailles decree which held Germany ineligible for a colonial mandate. This was an adroit way of raising the whole problem of "revision." Save in so far as the status, or as Nazis put it, the "honour" of Germany is affected, the actual return of Tanganyika, South-West Africa or the Cameroons is probably for Hitler a secondary question. The "token" restoration of a Pacific island might content him. We do not know in what order of time or importance the various cases for revision stand in his mind. Memel may be urgent, while Danzig, the

Corridor and Upper Silesia are indefinitely postponed. The demilitarised zone is somewhere on this agenda. But the most dangerous and yet the most inevitable item in it is Austria. The League cannot be "restored" until the dormant Article XIX of its Covenant becomes a reality. It is useless to say that we offer Germany "security" if she will return to the League. Security is the ideal of sated and conservative Powers. Germany, if she returns to her usual degree of sanity, may come to value it, but it is not what she most ardently wants to-day. What she wants is power, for with power she hopes to extort from the rest of us—what? Perhaps dominance is a truer answer than justice and an honourable revision of a degrading treaty. Perhaps the right answer is markets and fields for colonisation, that will employ the swollen industries of the Ruhr, preferably at Russia's expense.

Here, as we see it, is the crux of the whole question. If one is prepared for "revision," meaning a generous measure of resettlement, economic as well as political, it is honest to talk of a League policy. If revision is barred, or if it applies merely to such a minor issue as Memel, which affects only a fifth-rate Power, then it is self-deception to invoke the ideals of Geneva. Armaments and alliances may offer the only prospect of maintaining for a few years an ugly and precarious peace, but if we have to resort to these, let us do it without blinkers. The case is as doubtful as anything in history. "If you yield to bluster and military power," it may be said, "are you not putting a premium on their use? The means that may serve to attain a just end will avail as readily for a criminal purpose. Prating of League ideals, are you not proposing to reward their very negation, the principle of power? Do you seriously believe that this barbarian movement, steeped in brutality and treachery, can ever be tamed, ever domesticated, within the Genevan family? What, for example, would you propose for Austria? A plebiscite to settle its allegiance? That could be arranged, if you are willing to tolerate the persecutions and pressures that attend Nazi electioneering. But while reverence is duly paid with bribes and knuckle-dusters to the sacred principle of self-determination, Germany will be entrenched across the Danube, and the *Drang nach Osten* will again overwhelm the Balkans."

Such reasoning is not without force. But the substantial answer to it is that nothing more venerable than this same principle of power sustains the more questionable details of the *status quo*. Austria was created only to satisfy the strategical demands of the Italians and the French, and it enjoys sham independence with genuine poverty, thanks only to the guns of the Fascist Heimwehr and Mussolini's troops in the Brenner pass. The condition of revision must be that both sides abandon the principle of power. There can be no step towards it without a firm limitation of armaments. But before one asks a wronged nation to abandon its reliance on power, one must first show it that a peaceful road to justice lies open. At Stresa (after deliberations from which we should have hoped more if Captain Eden had been present) we may learn whether genuine equality and effective revision enter into the plans of the European coalition.

EASTER.—*Next week's issue will be published on Thursday instead of Friday.*

PROVIDENT CHECKS

DON'T BE AFRAID! The world is run on credit. . . . Without credit, the nation would be bankrupt . . . what is good for the nation is good for you.

WHAT effect, one wonders, does this typical piece of advertising have on its readers? How many are amused or left with a feeling of uneasiness? The extension of hire purchase in recent years to cover almost every conceivable human want has certainly made most of us aware that that system is not without its evils. There is, however, another method, about which too little is generally known, by which credit is provided for the poorest members of the community, those who have least defence against disreputable business methods. This is the provident check, or check and credit system.

An early example of this type of business was developed in Bradford in the 'nineties. It began as an organisation for the supply of credit only. Customers were given checks or vouchers showing the amount of credit allowed to them. These they could exchange for goods in any of the shops with which the firm had come to an arrangement. The arrangement was simply that the tradesman should supply goods to check customers at current prices and he would subsequently be paid, less a discount of 17½ per cent., by the firm. The customers repaid the loan with a "poundage" of 5 per cent. to the firm in weekly instalments. The idea spread, and firms doing this kind of business are now to be found in most large towns.

Their methods of working are interesting. When a customer applies for credit he, or she, is visited by one of the firm's representatives and various questions are asked. What is the customer's occupation? The name of his employer? Are there any other workers in the family? The replies are entered on a form and signed by the customer. The whole process takes only a few minutes and is, of course, usually conducted on the doorstep. No references are asked for, but the representative tries to supplement his information by "snooping" round the neighbourhood and making inquiries about the customer at the local shops. On this scanty basis he has to "pass credit," that is, to decide whether the customer is to be accepted and if so how much credit is to be given. As the representative is paid on a commission basis, it is obvious that there may be a tendency to give credit too easily, or to press upon the customer a larger sum than his circumstances warrant. Who can blame the customer if he seizes the opportunity of obtaining goods of which the family may be in desperate need? Ability to pay the subsequent instalments, however, will depend entirely on freedom from the calamities of sickness and unemployment.

Many of the larger firms doing check and credit business now supply goods themselves. It was found that shopkeepers managed to circumvent their undertaking to treat credit and cash customers alike. They soon became practised in recognising the credit customer and adjusting their prices accordingly. Feeling the inferiority of his position the customer would be unlikely to complain. One draper in a northern town was in the habit on Friday evenings when his shop was full, of bawling out "All check customers to the left-hand side of the shop," and there they had to line up. Their feelings can be imagined. Some tradesmen who did a large check business went so far as to stock their shops with inferior goods. As has been said, the result was that some of the firms supplying credit found it profitable to supply goods as well. Whether the customers benefited much from this change is, of course, another matter.

The worst aspect of the system is revealed when payments fall into arrears. A customer who is unable, probably through no fault of his own, to keep up the instalments is subjected to a prolonged process of bullying. The firm's representatives make repeated visits and try by fair means or foul to extract payment. They are instructed to call on Fridays, "when the people have drawn the dole." They are encouraged to take "a strong line," that is to use all kinds of threats. The customer

may be told that his employer will be informed, that the matter will be taken to the County Court, that the bailiffs will be brought in. If a woman has acted without her husband's consent she will be threatened with exposure and consequent domestic trouble. Another method which may be used in more " respectable " districts is that of rousing the neighbourhood, shouting so that all the neighbours may know that the wretched customer is unable to pay his debts. The representative may be sent out with a sheaf of blue documents whose legal appearance may terrify the ignorant. The use of these blue frighteners is now, under a recent Act of Parliament, illegal, but it is said to be still occasionally used in the poorest districts where the customers are unlikely to know when their tormentors are using unlawful methods. Dunning letters using much red ink and legal, and to the recipient incomprehensible, phraseology, may be sent. The sending of documents resembling final notices for debt is illegal, but the practice does not seem to have completely disappeared.

A vivid picture of the working of the system is given by some examples of the actual arrears slips on which the representatives of such firms report the results of their aptly named " visitations." The amount of credit given in these cases appears to range from six to nine pounds. One slip relates to Mrs. A., a woman with a family of sickly children and a husband in prison. It contains the record of repeated visits, promises to " pay something," punctuated by remarks from the head office such as " It is time we had better payments," " Don't you think it is about time we got some return here? " Mrs. B. is an old woman with an old and sick husband. " Wife seen —says husband ill in bed—promises to recommence payments Saturday next. Have threatened Court." Mrs. C. has been ill and her husband is unemployed. She seems, it is pleasant to record, to have met the collector with a vigorous flow of abuse. The other slips tell similar stories of repeated visits and threats, although it would appear to be obvious that the firms could not hope to collect the debts. They seem to find it impossible to realise that money cannot be drawn from empty pockets. " It is a cad's occupation, calculated to crush any vestige of decency or fraternal feeling," said a man who had had the experience of doing this kind of arrears work.

The employees of these firms are themselves subjected to the methods that they must apply. Many of them are unemployed clerks or shop assistants wearied of the unending job-hunt who see advertisements holding out golden promises to any man capable of hard work. They become agents or collectors. The pay is, in the majority of cases, purely on a commission basis at the rate of 1*s.* 6*d.* for each pound collected, and 1*s.* for each pound when a new customer is introduced. No commission is paid on orders from old customers. Without taking into account calls on customers who pay slowly or not at all an agent has to make on an average ten calls to collect one pound. Four hundred calls would be necessary to earn three pounds a week. Unless, however, he is exceptionally lucky he will not be given the opportunity of making anything like so many. If he should succeed in building up a large connection he may find part of it taken away from him, his employers acting, presumably, on the principle that if a man earns a good wage he becomes slack.

Hours of work are long, as many calls have to paid in the evenings, and sometimes even on Sunday mornings. One firm is said to expect its agents to have and use bicycles, but also requires them to sign a document to the effect that the use of bicycles is forbidden. Thus it hopes to escape its responsibility should an accident occur.

From collector or agent a man may rise to being an assistant manager. He will get a fixed wage of from 50*s.* to three pounds a week, and a commission of 1*s.* on every ten pounds collected weekly in his district over a fixed sum. This sum is usually fixed so high (in one London district, for example, it is £75) that his income from this source is not likely to be more than two or three shillings a week. An assistant manager may receive a travelling allowance of three or four shillings a week, but his actual expenses will be about double that sum. His contract forbids him to engage in any other business. As, however, his work probably occupies some eleven to twelve hours a day he is hardly likely to be tempted to do so. Though entitled to a half-day's holiday a week he will find that in practice he is seldom able to take it. Should be become a district or area manager he will earn three pounds ten, to four pounds a week under similar working conditions. Both as assistant and district manager he will spend much of his time on arrears work.

Many women are employed as agents by these firms. A married woman may take up a part-time agency as a means of supplementing the family income. At first all goes well. She is able to introduce new customers from her circle of acquaintances, her manager is pleased, and her commission amounts to perhaps £2 a week. Soon, however, the limit of her influence is reached and she finds that to earn 15*s.* to 20*s.* she must put in about five full working days. She will find too a change in the attitude of her employers. Once a week the agents and collectors in each district are called together to present their accounts and receive their pay. Each is subjected to an inquisition. The woman who is introducing fewer new customers will be told that she is " getting lazy," that she must be " losing interest in the job," that the firm cannot afford to employ slackers, and so on. " A veritable hell," is a strange description of pay day, but it is the description given by one of these workers.

No organisation exists among them. It has been said that the nature of the work is individualist and competitive and that the managers try to encourage this aspect. One attempt at combination was betrayed to the firm and the leaders were promptly dismissed. The consequences of dismissal are particularly serious. A clause in the employee's agreement prevents him from taking any similar work in the district for a period of years, a provision which almost rules out the possibility of his getting work of this kind, as, for obvious reasons, firms prefer that their agents should be residents of the district in which they work.

These methods of doing business and treating employees may not be practised by all check and credit firms, nor are they practised by such firms alone. They are an example of the evils that the mushroom growth of petty credit trading has brought in its wake. They reveal the need for further investigation, for new legislation and for the development of a disinterested credit machinery for the poor.

A LONDON DIARY

THE Campbell Act is again being used to prosecute the publishers of books which, however outspoken, are definitely not of the pornographic order at which the Act was aimed. It is unlucky that the Attorney-General, with whom lies the responsibility for such prosecutions, should be a sincere and fervent Evangelical—that is to say, a man whose standards in such matters are narrower than those of most of us. Sir Patrick Hastings, defending Messrs. Heinemann, the publishers of *Bessie Cotter*, said that :

> It ought to be possible for the Attorney-General or other responsible official to devise a means by which publishers could be informed that there was reason to object to any publication.

The Censorship of Plays provides theatrical managers with a convenient two-guinea insurance policy against prosecution ; and it would in some ways suit the publishers if there were a similar censorship of books. The present system is certainly unfair on them—I can think of half-a-dozen recent novels as outspoken as *Bessie Cotter*. But such a censorship would be intensely undesirable. I offer my sympathy, which is worth nothing, to Messrs. Heinemann, but I am delighted that the Attorney-General refused to consider Sir Patrick Hastings's dangerous suggestion.

* * *

The prosecution of the directors of Boriswood, Ltd., for publishing *Boy* in 1931 is an even more disquieting

event. *Boy* is James Hanley's best-known work and is admittedly a serious and powerful book. It is also intolerably painful and deals with subjects which are commonly called "unpleasant." But as far as the contents are concerned—I know nothing of the "wrapper"—it would never have occurred to me that any intelligent person would call it obscene or indecent. The facts, in brief, are these. A policeman called at the Bury Branch of the National Libraries and sequestered copies of the book. Proceedings were taken against this library for circulating the book and against Messrs. Boriswood as "accessories." The directors of Boriswood were committed to trial to the Manchester Assizes where Mr. Justice Porter, on March 20th last, fined each of them £50 and the company £250—certainly an unusually severe fine. If the case had originated in London it would, no doubt, have been something of a *cause célèbre*. James Hanley is well known, and reputable critics would certainly have testified on the publishers' side if they had pleaded "not guilty." But by a technical plea of guilty the local library manager appears to have made it very difficult for the publishers to defend their book, and the doubt left in one's mind is how far this type of censorship can be generally followed. Bury is not the only place where reactionary opinion is powerful nor the only place where a jury of citizens is likely to wish to uphold its reputation for respectability. The publisher and author seem to stand a very small chance in any small town where the police wish to show their zeal and the magistrates and jury their high moral tone. It is always possible for a local informer to raise objection to some book in local libraries, and publishers, booksellers and librarians are confronted with a new terror that the police, by frightening a local manager, may be able to obtain the withdrawal of reputable books.

* * *

The Official Receiver was quite amusing about the James and Shakspeare liquidation, but only one man could do justice to these shellac and pepper transactions—Mr. Belloc. Those who hope to follow the affair in all its ramifications should take a course under that indispensable guide and start preferably with his classic *Mr. Petre*. Once again nature has beaten art and Mr. Belloc may even come in with a charge of plagiarism before the event. When, following the pepper crisis, the pound weakened and gilt-edged declined, the spokesman of the National Government had the effrontery to ascribe these movements to foreign apprehensions of a future Labour Government. The public can now form an estimate of the whispers that actually went around the Continent and judge whether the bogy of a Labour Government played any part at that stage.

* * *

I have always deplored the decline of the political drama and therefore found peculiar satisfaction in the Croydon Repertory Theatre's excellent production of a new play called *Power* by Nigel Balchin. It tells the true story of a Fascist revolution in any country. The resemblances to Germany are obvious, but the main features and characters would apply anywhere. They are the outcome of circumstances. There is the violent sadistic, bullying Göringesque man of action who wants power for himself and thinks that it resides in a gun; there is his equally brutal underling, the flying-squad leader. Both of these are killed on the inevitable 30th June occasion when they plot to seize power from the "leader." Behind the scenes is the scheming and unscrupulous Secretary, who manages every one and who is responsible for the choice of the "leader" himself. The leader is the orator of the revolution, an idealist, who is chosen because the masses believe in him and because his self-seeking colleagues think he will be an easy fool to manage. His tragedy is that he believes that the revolution which his Party has made is really to bring about the new era he has persuaded the masses to look for. In office he tries, with the help of a young equally idealistic economist, to carry out the nominal programme and to improve the conditions of his millions of devoted followers. He finds that he is helpless in the hands of the bankers and industrialists. Unable to obtain loans, faced with the prospect of not being able to give a dole to the unemployed, he is compelled to give in to the capitalists whom he hates. Dr. Schacht is inevitable. Power rests in the long run not with bullets or with phrases, but with money. It is no use seizing political power without economic power.

* * *

As if to illustrate this remark I notice in the *Times* the announcement that a trade pact has just been signed between Germany and Soviet Russia. The Soviet is to place new orders in Germany to the value of 200,000,000 marks, receiving for this purpose a credit from a German banking syndicate—which, I understand, is Woolf, the German-Jewish firm. So much for the reality of a nationalist revolution against Bolsheviks, Jews and financiers!

* * *

Coming out of a theatre recently I found the traffic arrangements entirely disordered: none of the "carriage folk" could get away, because one motor remained magnificently static in front of the door. I asked a policeman the reason, and he explained that an ex-Queen was in the theatre, adding ruefully that she went to the theatre often, very often, much too often. For whenever she does so, the traffic becomes constipated until she emerges. "If we could only get her out before any of the others," he added, "it would be O.K. I'd like to throw a notice on the screen, a minute before the end of the show—Wanted Urgently, the Queen of ——." I am all for hospitality to exiles, whether refujews or refuqueens, but I respectfully suggest that it would be more elegant if the dethroned did not claim diplomatic privileges so inconvenient to the public. The Man in the Street does not want to remain there for an unnecessary ten minutes.

CRITIC

THIS ENGLAND

Our prize of 5s. for the contribution at the head of this column goes this week to Mr. R. Jordan.

All cuttings should be addressed to "This England," 10 Great Turnstile, High Holborn, W.C.1.

The Council was still putting its house in order and he was anxious that they should not change horses crossing the stream, whilst there was much spade work to be done.—*Harrow Observer and Gazette.*

NAZIS' DANZIG ELECTION TRIUMPH	DANZIG ELECTIONS: A NAZI FAILURE
—*Daily Mail* poster.	—*Times* poster.

An ingenious Blackpool showman proposes to exhibit fasting brides encased in ice-blocks for periods of twenty-four hours.—*Sunday Express.*

A pilot came on board to take the ship up the Dardanelles. Somehow, neither the ship nor myself cared for a Greek pilot to handle my ship, so, as we were just getting under way, I told the pilot I would take her up myself, having been up and down the Dardanelles many times some years previously. Immediately I made this decision it seemed to me the ship made a gesture of happiness by a series of peculiar, though faint, vibrations.—Capt. Sir Arthur Rostron in *Observer.*

There is something specially clean and wholesome about boating men of which one is not so conscious among other athletes.—*Sunday Times.*

If for no other reason than sheer bulk this book has to be taken seriously.—*Observer.*

As a lover of English games I very much deplore the introduction of baseball into this area, as I feel that if it becomes popular it will do harm to cricket.

In the U.S.A. I have seen 100,000 people verging on insanity over baseball. Surely our national sport, which is clean and gentlemanly, is good enough for Englishmen.—Letter in *Daily Dispatch.*

A DISAPPOINTED MAN

A BLIND man, having received his sight as the result of a remarkable operation, confessed the other day that he was so disappointed in the world he saw that he wondered whether he was not happier when he was blind. Human beings were of a different shape and appearance from those with which his imagination had endowed them. Everything apparently, from motor cars to flower gardens, fell short of the glorious images he had made of them. The gift of sight brought him merely disillusionment.

It is easy to understand his distress. Most of us have experienced the same sense of disillusionment when we have for the first time seen with our eyes something that we had hitherto idealised in our imagination. I remember being deeply disappointed in the first lion I saw. Until then I had regarded him as the King of Beasts and had attributed to him a size and majesty such as have never belonged to any real lion. The lion in the cage at the managerie seemed to be only about one-third the size of the lion of my dreams, and he bore few marks of regality. Life in a cage in a travelling menagerie does not, I fancy, conduce to kingliness of bearing. The lion, however, was not the only beast that fell below my expectations. The elephant himself was only a miniature of what I had imagined, and the camel a small, seedy, turkey-like animal with very little of the romance of the desert about him.

It may be that children exaggerate size in their imaginary pictures of animals they have not seen. They believe that lions and tigers belong to a gigantic animal world in comparison with which the everyday domestic animals are little more than dwarfs. They romanticise the very big and the very little, and are disenchanted by what seems to them rather ordinary bulk. I myself, I confess, was disappointed in my first sight of London, not because London was not big enough, but because the buildings were not bigger. How modestly tiny Westminster Abbey seemed! How little of the grandiose there was in those days in the face of the Strand! There were famous theatres that were smaller than the theatres in my native city. As for Buckingham Palace, I am not sure whether it was because of its inadequate size that I was disappointed in the building, but it was certainly not my idea of a palace. Before one has seen a palace, the word "palace" is extraordinarily romantic. One thinks of a palace as a building more wonderful than any other building, except, perhaps, a cathedral. To the imagination it expresses the glory of the world, not only in its towering bulk, but in the reckless splendour of its ornaments and its illuminations. It is such a palace as exists only in fairy-tales—a palace worthy of Cinderella. And Buckingham Palace was not that.

In order to appreciate the beauty of existing things, I suspect one has to get used to them. Familiarity, they say, breeds contempt, but it also breeds liking. In this part of the world most of us are familiar with horses from our childhood, and so—apart from the betting-ring—we have never been disappointed in horses. We have never conjured up the picture of an ideal horse quite unlike a real horse and then complained that the real horse was ugly in comparison with it. Yet, if one had been brought up in a horseless island, and knew nothing of horses except from legends of their speed and strength and beauty, might one not have made such a fantastically false, if beautiful, picture of a horse for oneself that one would have been shocked by one's first sight of Golden Miller even at Cheltenham? "This," one might well have said, "is not the horse of my dreams." The man who has never seen a horse before expects too much from the first sight of one: he expects it even to be unlike a horse. Familiarity, however, has taught the rest of us what to expect in a horse, and to admire it for being what it is, even to the Wordsworthian countenance. On the other hand, I have heard an Englishman declare that he was disappointed in his first sight of an Arab horse. Ever since learning "The Arab's Farewell to His Steed" at school he had loved an imaginary Arab horse which was like the finest kind of English race-horse, and the short-necked Arab animal he saw seemed to him unworthy of the name of "steed."

It is possible that, if we could be transported back into the Middle Ages, many of us would also be disappointed in the appearance of the horses which the knights rode into battle. Were these great war-horses really as beautiful as the cavalry horses of modern times? I have been told by a man who professes to know something of the subject that the medieval war-horse, unlike the charger in nineteenth-century war pictures, was a heavy lumbering brute of a kind that would nowadays be put to work on a farm. Even the knights might have been disappointing. The eye is more realistic than the imagination, and realism is usually the way of disillusionments.

We can avoid disappointment only by not expecting the wrong thing and by not expecting too much. Too great anticipation is often the enemy of pleasure. How often has our enjoyment of a good book been injured by our having been led to expect to find it a masterpiece! I am sure I have been disappointed in more good films than bad films simply because good films are so rare that they are enormously overpraised. The photography and the acting may be up to your anticipations, but how often the imaginative substance of the piece is as commonplace as that of a Victorian novelette! At a bad film, however, from which you expect nothing, you often find yourself delighted by some unexpected comic situation or piece of good acting. There is much to be said for confining your visits to the cinema to bad or mediocre plays: it will spare you many a disappointment.

Every traveller or tourist has known at some time or other the pangs of disappointed anticipation and the pleasures of the unexpected. Oscar Wilde was disappointed in the Altantic Ocean, and other men have been disappointed in the Taj Mahal and in the Mosque at Cordova. People with ardent imaginations invent for themselves largely false pictures of famous and beautiful places, and then complain bitterly that the famous and beautiful places are unlike the pictures. I have met people who jeered at Clovelly merely because they had heard of its beauty before they visited it. If they had come on it unexpectedly as an unknown place I am sure they would have been entranced by it. I was so fortunate as to visit Clovelly for the first time after hearing it dispraised, and, expecting nothing, was enabled to realise that it is a village that men and women would travel two days and nights to see if it were not in England. I myself, however, have for some time past given up expecting a famous place to be like what I expect it to be like, and so am seldom painfully disappointed. I once committed the sin of being disappointed in Rome, because its appearance did not turn out to be in accordance with my forecast. To-day it causes me no dismay to find my prophetic visions falsified. I make a quiet mental readjustment, and try to be interested—occasionally with success—in things as they are.

In time, no doubt, the man cured of blindness will become equally philosophic. He will learn not to expect every human face to be as beautiful as a face seen in a dream. He will learn not to be surprised to see marks of cunning, greed and cruelty here and there on the faces he passes in the street, and not to feel woebegone because every man has not the face of a Greek god and every woman the face of a Helen. He will learn to take for granted ugly houses in ugly streets and to be grateful because some beautiful houses are left. And, after surveying the hideousness of the world, he will emerge from the depths and see that, in spite of ribbon development, slag-heaps, and some far from attractive faces, the world in spring is nevertheless beautiful.

Or it may be that the man cured of blindness is right in refusing to come to terms with facts and in demanding a world, not beautiful in shreds and patches, but as beautiful as the world of his fancy. Unfortunately, we cannot be sure that the man's ideal world would strike us as being more beautiful than the world we know. The fact is that other people's beautiful things and places are often to the rest of us the most disappointing things and places on earth. Who has ever wanted to live in anybody else's Utopia? Y. Y.

AN ESSAY IN DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION

IT is the general experience of those scores of thousands of people who have been working for the Peace Ballot that it has proved to be a most successful experiment in democratic education. Already the Ballot has afforded an impressive demonstration of the national will for peace, and, what is more important now, a demonstration that there is an immense volume of public opinion which understands the price of peace and wants that price to be paid. But besides that, the experiment may have lasting value as a lesson in the technique of government by persuasion.

It has been my lot to do one or two speaking tours each year, for a number of years past, on the League, on Disarmament, and kindred subjects. I have never found so keen an interest and so quick an understanding as I have found since last November in speaking all over the country about the Peace Ballot; and this experience is confirmed, I believe, by Lord Cecil, Sir Norman Angell, Lord Lytton, and others who have had much more experience than myself. The most striking point about these meetings, large and small, has been the healthy distrust of partisanship, the suspicion and dislike of any argument that could be regarded as unfair. In this enterprise, conducted on a non-party basis, the electors have, I believe, shown a new kind of sensitiveness to the appeal of reason, a finer scruple in the use of argument, than has hitherto been employed in the working of our democracy. And this has its value not only for the electorate but also for those who conduct the Ballot: they have had to learn a new technique and have had to be far more sensitive than any parliamentary candidate or party organisation to the dangers of unfairness or misunderstanding. Some mistakes may have been made in the directing of the Ballot. Many people think, for instance, that it was undesirable to use the slogan "Peace or War" on the earlier literature, since this might have the effect of suggesting to those who did not trouble to look at the literature itself that the country was being asked whether it was in favour of peace or war. People resented any suggestion that, if they were to answer "No" to one or other of the questions, that would mean that they were really in favour of war. Of course, no such idiotic suggestion was in fact made or entertained by the promoters of the Ballot, though no doubt all or nearly all of them believe that the policy indicated by answering "yes" is the policy conducive to peace. But the anxiety over such a point as this was not merely finicky and tiresome; it was a sign of a healthy scruple. People don't want to feel that they are being got at.

Here is another example, mentioned not as a criticism but simply as an evidence of the need for infinite care in presenting such questions to the elector. The third question of the Ballot reads "Are you in favour of the all-round abolition of national military and naval aircraft by international agreement?" Everyone who has considered the subject at all is likely to know that if military aviation is to be abolished, something must be done to prevent, so far as possible, the use of civil aircraft for military purposes. This obvious point was made clear in the literature about the Ballot: but many people think that it might have been advisable to add a few words on the ballot paper itself to indicate the connection between the two policies.

Perhaps the most cheering of these evidences of the health of democracy—apart from the astonishing results themselves—has been the resentment at any suggestion that the questions of the Ballot are too difficult for the ordinary voter to answer, or that they must be regarded as trick questions which do not admit of a straightforward answer. Lord Beaverbrook's campaign against the "Ballot of Blood" did some harm at the outset in some places; but on the whole it probably did much more good than harm. A large proportion of Members of Parliament on the National Government side were opposed to the Ballot: many of them publicly discouraged it, on the ground that the first two questions were redundant and that the others did not admit of a simple answer. I cannot understand how any Member who professes respect for the democratic principle can object to these questions being frankly discussed or can maintain that they do not admit of an intelligent yes or no if fairly explained. Of course some of the questions, especially the one about the arms trade, involve complicated issues; but it is much better that a broad direction should be given by the electorate after a dispassionate discussion on non-party lines than that such issues should be disposed of in the hurly-burly of a parliamentary election. The present votes are not mandatory; they are merely an indication of public opinion. They are votes given upon questions of some complexity; but those questions have got to be answered sooner or later, mixed up with a host of other questions and under the influence of all sorts of considerations about parties and persons.

Those Members who have opposed the Ballot have, I believe, done themselves no good with the electorate. One Member in the North was particularly fierce in his advice to his constituents to destroy the whole Ballot paper; but 65 per cent. of the possible voters disregarded his advice and cast their votes. In Birmingham, none of the M.P.s gave any support whatever to the Ballot, and Sir Austen Chamberlain was an active (and, I think, unfair) opponent. Yet no fewer than 284,000, or 43.4 per cent. of the 655,500 possible voters, cast their votes, and nearly 98 per cent. of the voters were in favour of Britain remaining a member of the League. Eighty-one per cent. were for prohibition of the manufacture and sale of armaments for private profit. Even on the most difficult question, concerning military sanctions, the affirmative vote was 76.6 per cent., and the majority for economic sanctions was 93.5 per cent. In three constituencies the poll was a very low one, but in King's Norton the percentage was 64.9. Birmingham is not abnormal; Leeds shows almost the same percentage, and many places show a much higher average. At Rossendale the percentage was as high as 72 per cent., and in South Wales some of the percentages have been higher still. Those bare figures are enough to show that, as THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION has emphasised, there is now a movement of public opinion about peace policy which no politician can afford to ignore. If the political leaders suppose that these results are simply the outcome of one-sided propaganda they are mistaken: in Manchester, the proportions of Yes and No votes has corresponded closely with the proportion in other parts of the country, but at Manchester no literature of any kind was issued with the Ballot papers. The proportion have been extraordinarily uniform throughout the country. In the Cornish hamlets near which I happen to live, the proportions have been almost identical with those in the great cities.

If only those Members of Parliament and leader writers who have poured cold water on the enterprise could see something of the temper in which the work has been done. In one place near London I found that 600 helpers had been enlisted in the first week of applications: in Birmingham they have had 7,000 helpers; in a place no bigger than Falmouth they mustered 170. The distributing and collecting of ballot papers is not a pleasant or easy job. For what other enterprise of the kind would it have been possible to find so great a response? I can think of none. But the point is not merely that the volunteers were numerous, but that, so far as I have seen it, the work has been done with remarkable fairness and scruple, and has served to stimulate a most reasonable discussion about the real implications of the collective peace system. Those Conservative M.P.s who have recognised that the Ballot is a valuable piece of democratic education—such as Sir Thomas Inskip, Captain Hudson, Mr. Charles Williams, Sir Arnold Wilson, and Mr. Vyvyan Adams—have been more clear-sighted than the majority of their party colleagues. And Lord Cecil and his colleagues who had the vision and courage to launch the Ballot, at a time when the League's stock seemed to stand lower than at any time since the war, have been amply justified already. They believed that

the people of this country were ready to respond to such an inquiry with enough understanding and enough devoted service to make the vote valuable as an education and as a demonstration. They were right.

W. ARNOLD FORSTER

ULTIMATUM TO PEACE

DOVE of the world's desire,
Hymned by the nations' choir,
Wilt thou to Heaven retire,
Deaf to discussion?
Cold to the Powers' whole
Plan for armed peace control?
Canst thou not hear the Pole?
Know'st thou not Russian?

Soarest thou out of reach
Even of English speech?
Can France's peace-time screech
Fail to allure thee?
Is then thy German scant
Balked by the Nazi's cant?
Or does Il Duce's rant
Not reassure thee?

Read'st thou not guarantees
Given in Japanese?
Can such transparent pleas,
Goddess, unnerve thee?
States, dropping warfare crass,
Arms for thy sake amass,
Say it with poison gas,
But to preserve thee!

Over thine empty chair
Damocles' sword in air
Hangs by a single hair,
Ready to fall now.
Come on thy silver wing,
Come with a piece of string,
Tie up the dangling thing
Once and for all now!

Goddess or bird obtuse,
Thee will no pact induce?
Hast for this bristling truce
Small predilection?
Then nothing less than war,
Peace, will thy reign restore.
Slain must thou be before
Thy resurrection!

SAGITTARIUS

Correspondence

VOLUNTARY HOSPITALS

SIR,—I write to say that my experience of hospitals is in agreement with your anonymous correspondent of March 23rd, and signed protests in the following numbers of THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION. A great many criticisms, in my friend Mr. Gerald Barry's article this week, are just. But I do not think it is the voluntary system (or lack of funds) which is to blame for the faults in our great hospitals: it is the hide-bound system.

Why is it that poor people, and even those who are not very poor, shudder when they are told they must go into a hospital? Doctors and surgeons of the highest efficiency give their services for nothing, and though doubtless their private practice makes up for their financial sacrifice, their time is of even greater importance.

It is true that money would prevent the understaffing in the general wards, and that nurses are insufficiently paid; but it is the harness of routine which thwarts recovery, and depresses the spirits of most of the patients in our hospitals.

Can it be right that every patient should be woken between the hours of five and six in the morning—the only time when there is no noise of groaning, dusting, or talking; and when a few hours of extra sleep might make all the difference to the recovery of the suffering and the sick.

When I ask him a question the answer is always the same: "We have to get our patients ready for the visits of the doctors and surgeons." But the object of the visits of these experts is not to serve the hospital, but the patient. They are not vetting animals, they are healing human beings, and the wise doctor or surgeon will be more encouraged by seeing his patient recovering than by knowing that he is clean, or what his temperature was at five or six in the morning. No hospital should be blamed for its food, as English cooking is proverbially poor, and it is incumbent upon those who send servants, friends, or relations, to help the hospital by bringing fruit, jellies and other luxuries when they visit the wards. It would take too much time and space to mention other matters for criticism on this subject. I end by saying that I cannot speak too highly of the matrons, sisters, and nurses, whom I have met in most of the London hospitals; but you have only to notice the sad and sullen expressions on the faces of half the patients to realise that there is something wrong somewhere, and I think the whole system of our hospitals is antiquated and should be completely overhauled.

MARGOT OXFORD

SIR,—After ten years' work as a doctor in the wards of voluntary and municipal hospitals, I have no hesitation in saying that Mr. Gerald Barry and the writer of "Experiences of a Hospital Patient" are quite justified in their criticisms, and give a true picture of the conditions generally prevailing in our hospitals, even the most famous. One could easily add to the list of unnecessary hardships to patients entailed by existing administration. Some of them are due to the obsolete open ward of 20–40 beds (lack of privacy, proximity of noisy and odorous neighbours, risk of infection, lack of sleep, public death)—scarcely any effort is being made to abolish it, even in newly planned institutions; others are due to sheer conservatism, well seconded by parsimony (chronic understaffing with nurses, and often with doctors, unsuitable furnishing, inadequate meals, lack of decent washing arrangements, etc.).

The present state of affairs could scarcely continue if complaints were easily made. They are not. Even the independent-minded patient justifiably fears retribution: for small comforts (the prompt bed pan, really hot water and food, even the adequate but not too adequate aperient), he is entirely dependent on the good will of the staff, and his days will assuredly not be the more pleasant for his outburst. Perhaps even more important is the force of the purely sentimental idea that nurses and doctors, even if they are paid for their work, are somehow different from other people, self-sacrificing and therefore not to be criticised too severely: a subsidiary consideration is the fact that the individual nurse or doctor is rarely the person actually responsible for the wretched patients' sufferings.

The attitude of the surgeon mentioned in the article, although exceptionally virulent, is quite usual: such a man is well used to being treated as a demigod, and criticism is not the duty of a devotee. Very few members of the medical and administrative staffs of hospitals are even aware of the need for reform.

123 Bournville Lane, Bournville, Birmingham.

DUNCAN LEYS (M.D. Oxon.)

SIR,—I was interested to read the "Experiences of a Hospital Patient" in your last issue. A few years ago I spent some months in a county hospital with a fractured femur, patella, ulna, radius, and clavicle. The cleanliness was much better than that recorded in your article, but the standard of stupidity in the nursing organisation was similar. The treatment that I received (free) from my surgeon was gentle, considerate, efficient and successful beyond my wildest dreams, but the craze for tidiness and routine which obsessed the matron, and which she drilled into her staff, would have been a credit to any imbecile. She was, of course, most anxious that patients should recover, but the real objection to suffering, it seemed to me, was that it made patients untidy the bedclothes.

After much thought and inquiry I have come to the following conclusions. (1) The nursing side of hospitals will never be sensibly run until disappointed virgins of the workhouse-mistress variety are no longer appointed to positions of control. (2) The

idea that women are the gentle-feeling sex is a gigantic leg-pull. I should like to say that the nurses at the hospital in question, with one exception, were kind beyond reproach; they just couldn't feel, that's all. To them things hurt because they made people squeak, that's how one knew.

Champions of female gentleness to suffering, who will not, I think, be found among those who have seriously suffered, will claim that an unskilled nurse must of necessity be rough compared with a surgeon. The difference is not due to training, as anyone sufficiently interested to make the following experiment can show.

Let them travel (as I did) on the London tube in the rush hours, with one arm muffled up in white bandages and slings, and let them limp with a rubber-tipped stick. If they notice how much consideration they receive from either sex they will reach my conclusion.

May I say finally that I was not a disappointed sufferer who found the world a hard place. In fact, I did not suffer much after the first month, and I spent a larger proportion of my time laughing than I have anywhere else. Lovers of liberty will be pleased to know that I never was tidy, and that the Matron finally abandoned me as hopeless.

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Savile Club, W.1.

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One important aspect should be kept in mind. The Law and still more the legal practice in libel cases act as an effective censorship on imperial questions, especially those relating to the "black" or "brown" parts of the Empire. It works in this way. The Governor, say, of the Rum-ti-fu Islands puts down very drastically some nationalist movement. A meeting may be bombed, or dispersed by machine guns. Anyone who ventures to comment upon this matter in England is liable to have an action brought against him. He may have visited the island, and made the fullest inquiries. He may even be a resident with first-hand knowledge, but his position is miserable, unless he is either a millionaire or a pauper.

He will be brought before a Judge, whose ideas on Imperial questions have a fine Victorian flavour. There will be a Special Jury picked in London, from a panel which is largely composed of licensed victuallers. Before this unfriendly combination he will be asked to prove the truth of his statements by direct evidence. It will not be sufficient to show that he used proper care in his inquiries, and that he can justify his views from official publications, or the reports of commissions with a strong bias towards the Government. A full defence would involve a visit to Rum-ti-fu, the collection of unwilling Rum-ti-fuans who survived the bombing or shooting, their transportation to England, where their evidence will be riddled by barristers, who will have no difficulty in persuading a collection of public-house keepers and stockbrokers that it is absurd to believe black heathens against an Englishman and a gentleman. Libel cases are always a god-send to the lawyers. They usually drag on for several days at the cost of many hundred pounds a day.

Few writers on Imperial questions are either millionaires or paupers; they cannot risk a case which will involve them in several thousand pounds of costs, quite apart from the danger of an adverse verdict before such a doubtful tribunal, and of heavy damages. Even a favourable verdict may not save the writer, for it is quite likely that he cannot collect his costs from some retired civil servant who can easily spend his last years abroad.

Is not the real solution that libel cases should be criminal prosecutions except when there is definite financial damage proved? Few who feel strongly on these questions would mind a criminal case, tried before an ordinary jury, with much more of the onus of proof upon the prosecution. Even a conviction and sentence of imprisonment would be a mild punishment compared with the financial ruin which follows the defence, even the successful defence, of a civil action for libel. G. T. GARRATT

Bishopsteignton House,
Near Teignmouth, S. Devon.

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

SIR,—I was concerned to read the article by your correspondent O.H. under the heading of "Fortuities" on the case of a woman, aged 31, suffering from infantile paralysis. This woman is said to be receiving 6*s*. a week disablement benefit, and only the rent of her room from the London County Council Public Assistance authorities, who expect her to live on her 6*s*. per week.

As member of the London County Council for Mile End, in which this woman, according to your correspondent, is living, and also Leader of the L.C.C. Public Assistance Committee, I have made extensive inquiries into the possibility of such a case being treated in the way suggested.

I have found particulars of a woman, aged 36, living in Mile End, suffering from infantile paralysis, who has for some years been receiving either hospital, institutional or outdoor relief. Without troubling you with the full particulars of this case, I would like to point out that the person I have mentioned is at present in receipt of 21*s*. outdoor relief, her rent being 10*s*. per week. If the case I have quoted is not the one to which your correspondent refers, I shall be glad to have immediate particulars as to name, address, etc., of the woman concerned, in order that I may give your many readers the true facts of the case.

I am sure my colleagues on the County Council would be very shocked to learn that the Labour Council expected any lone person to live on 6*s*. a week, and personally I am certain that no such case exists. DAN FRANKEL,

The County Hall, L.C.C. member for Mile End,
London, S.E 1. Leader of Public Assistance Committee

[The contribution to which Mr. Frankel refers was an accurate report of an actual conversation. Its social interest seemed to us to lie in the fact that this woman made no complaint about her treatment, her one fear being that she would not be allowed to retain her "home." The episode took place some time ago and we are glad to have Mr. Frankel's assurance that such a situation is not possible under the administration of the present Public Assistance Committee. As to this particular case we are informed that the woman now receives 4*s*. a week more from the Public Assistance Committee than she did at the time of the original communication.—Ed. *N.S. & N.*]

FAMINE IN RUSSIA

SIR,—In a letter in which he makes reference to the grain supplies of the U.S.S.R., Mr. Marcus Samuel tells us that "the one outstanding fact" is the failure of the Soviet authorities to secure, in certain recent years, an average production comparable to that harvested in the Russian Empire in the year 1913. Mr. Samuel obtains an average by adding together the crops of two bad years and one good year, and he states that during the period that he takes for review Russia's production has been nearly 10,000,000 tons per annum less than in the year 1913. With the accuracy of his not too optimistic estimates I am not at the

the people of this country were ready to respond to such an inquiry with enough understanding and enough devoted service to make the vote valuable as an education and as a demonstration. They were right.

W. ARNOLD FORSTER

ULTIMATUM TO PEACE

DOVE of the world's desire,
Hymned by the nations' choir,
Wilt thou to Heaven retire,
Deaf to discussion?
Cold to the Powers' whole
Plan for armed peace control?
Canst thou not hear the Pole?
Know'st thou not Russian?

Soarest thou out of reach
Even of English speech?
Can France's peace-time screech
Fail to allure thee?
Is then thy German scant
Balked by the Nazi's cant?
Or does Il Duce's rant
Not reassure thee?

Read'st thou not guarantees
Given in Japanese?
Can such transparent pleas,
Goddess, unnerve thee?
States, dropping warfare crass,
Arms for thy sake amass,
Say it with poison gas,
But to preserve thee!

Over thine empty chair
Damocles' sword in air
Hangs by a single hair,
Ready to fall now.
Come on thy silver wing,
Come with a piece of string,
Tie up the dangling thing
Once and for all now!

Goddess or bird obtuse,
Thee will no pact induce?
Hast for this bristling truce
Small predilection?
Then nothing less than war,
Peace, will thy reign restore.
Slain must thou be before
Thy resurrection!

SAGITTARIUS

Correspondence

VOLUNTARY HOSPITALS

SIR,—I write to say that my experience of hospitals is in agreement with your anonymous correspondent of March 23rd, and signed protests in the following numbers of THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION. A great many criticisms, in my friend Mr. Gerald Barry's article this week, are just. But I do not think it is the voluntary system (or lack of funds) which is to blame for the faults in our great hospitals: it is the hide-bound system.

Why is it that poor people, and even those who are not very poor, shudder when they are told they must go into a hospital? Doctors and surgeons of the highest efficiency give their services for nothing, and though doubtless their private practice makes up for their financial sacrifice, their time is of even greater importance.

It is true that money would prevent the understaffing in the general wards, and that nurses are insufficiently paid; but it is the harness of routine which thwarts recovery, and depresses the spirits of most of the patients in our hospitals.

Can it be right that every patient should be woken between the hours of five and six in the morning—the only time when there is no noise of groaning, dusting, or talking; and when a few hours of extra sleep might make all the difference to the recovery of the suffering and the sick.

When I ask him a question the answer is always the same: "We have to get our patients ready for the visits of the doctors and surgeons." But the object of the visits of these experts is not to serve the hospital, but the patient. They are not vetting animals, they are healing human beings, and the wise doctor or surgeon will be more encouraged by seeing his patient recovering than by knowing that he is clean, or what his temperature was at five or six in the morning. No hospital should be blamed for its food, as English cooking is proverbially poor, and it is incumbent upon those who send servants, friends, or relations, to help the hospital by bringing fruit, jellies and other luxuries when they visit the wards. It would take too much time and space to mention other matters for criticism on this subject. I end by saying that I cannot speak too highly of the matrons, sisters, and nurses, whom I have met in most of the London hospitals; but you have only to notice the sad and sullen expressions on the faces of half the patients to realise that there is something wrong somewhere, and I think the whole system of our hospitals is antiquated and should be completely overhauled.

MARGOT OXFORD

SIR,—After ten years' work as a doctor in the wards of voluntary and municipal hospitals, I have no hesitation in saying that Mr. Gerald Barry and the writer of "Experiences of a Hospital Patient" are quite justified in their criticisms, and give a true picture of the conditions generally prevailing in our hospitals, even the most famous. One could easily add to the list of unnecessary hardships to patients entailed by existing administration. Some of them are due to the obsolete open ward of 20–40 beds (lack of privacy, proximity of noisy and odorous neighbours, risk of infection, lack of sleep, public death)—scarcely any effort is being made to abolish it, even in newly planned institutions; others are due to sheer conservatism, well seconded by parsimony (chronic understaffing with nurses, and often with doctors, unsuitable furnishing, inadequate meals, lack of decent washing arrangements, etc.).

The present state of affairs could scarcely continue if complaints were easily made. They are not. Even the independent-minded patient justifiably fears retribution: for small comforts (the prompt bed pan, really hot water and food, even the adequate but not too adequate aperient), he is entirely dependent on the good will of the staff, and his days will assuredly not be the more pleasant for his outburst. Perhaps even more important is the force of the purely sentimental idea that nurses and doctors, even if they are paid for their work, are somehow different from other people, self-sacrificing and therefore not to be criticised too severely: a subsidiary consideration is the fact that the individual nurse or doctor is rarely the person actually responsible for the wretched patients' sufferings.

The attitude of the surgeon mentioned in the article, although exceptionally virulent, is quite usual: such a man is well used to being treated as a demigod, and criticism is not the duty of a devotee. Very few members of the medical and administrative staffs of hospitals are even aware of the need for reform.

123 Bournville Lane, DUNCAN LEYS (M.D. Oxon.)
Bournville, Birmingham.

SIR,—I was interested to read the "Experiences of a Hospital Patient" in your last issue. A few years ago I spent some months in a county hospital with a fractured femur, patella, ulna, radius, and clavicle. The cleanliness was much better than that recorded in your article, but the standard of stupidity in the nursing organisation was similar. The treatment that I received (free) from my surgeon was gentle, considerate, efficient and successful beyond my wildest dreams, but the craze for tidiness and routine which obsessed the matron, and which she drilled into her staff, would have been a credit to any imbecile. She was, of course, most anxious that patients should recover, but the real objection to suffering, it seemed to me, was that it made patients untidy the bedclothes.

After much thought and inquiry I have come to the following conclusions. (1) The nursing side of hospitals will never be sensibly run until disappointed virgins of the workhouse-mistress variety are no longer appointed to positions of control. (2) The

idea that women are the gentle-feeling sex is a gigantic leg-pull. I should like to say that the nurses at the hospital in question, with one exception, were kind beyond reproach; they just couldn't feel, that's all. To them things hurt because they made people squeak, that's how one knew.

Champions of female gentleness to suffering, who will not, I think, be found among those who have seriously suffered, will claim that an unskilled nurse must of necessity be rough compared with a surgeon. The difference is not due to training, as anyone sufficiently interested to make the following experiment can show.

Let them travel (as I did) on the London tube in the rush hours, with one arm muffled up in white bandages and slings, and let them limp with a rubber-tipped stick. If they notice how much consideration they receive from either sex they will reach my conclusion.

May I say finally that I was not a disappointed sufferer who found the world a hard place. In fact, I did not suffer much after the first month, and I spent a larger proportion of my time laughing than I have anywhere else. Lovers of liberty will be pleased to know that I never was tidy, and that the Matron finally abandoned me as hopeless.

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moment concerned, but I would remark that your correspondent does not remind us that 1913 was a year of unprecedented abundance. Never under the Empire did the territories of Russia, during any period of years, produce grain crops that averaged within 10,000,000 tons of those of 1913. The yield in Russia of the four principal grains—wheat, rye, barley and oats—was about 9,500,000 tons less in 1912 than in 1913, and in 1911 (a year of bad harvests) about 27,000,000 tons less than in 1913. Mr. Samuel's figures would seem to suggest that the U.S.S.R. has made progress in the development of its grain areas.

Waltham St. Lawrence. EDGAR C. WILLIS

LEFT THEATRE

SIR,—Mr. Ivor Brown in his article last week dealt with a somewhat surprisingly heterogeneous selection of theatrical ventures under the title of "Left Theatres." With good reason he poured scorn on the West End play-producing societies, and suggested that as the working class cannot get to the theatre, the theatre should go to the working class. Mr. Brown seems ignorant of the fact that a year ago the "Left Theatre" was formed for precisely this purpose; that it has taken not one but three plays to Town Halls in Greenwich, Battersea, West and East Ham; and that it has the support and affiliations of over forty Trade Union branches in these districts. That this attempt to "make the British working man theatre-minded" is not such foolhardy audacity as he suggests has already been proved by the enthusiasm with which the performances were received. Were the finances of the society able to bear even modest advertising expenses the numbers of both the audiences and the productions could have been doubled with ease. In each case the plays have also been produced in the West End. Mr. Brown is contemptuous of this: but since private subsidies are extremely infrequent and hard to come by, and since it is also almost the only means of gaining publicity in the form of dramatic criticism, and thereby increasing the interest in working-class districts later, such a policy is easily justified. Furthermore, it is possible to query his assertion that Central London, whether bearded or not, is really above redemption or, on the other hand, not worthy of it.

Mr. Brown is anxious to know how the balance sheet stands for these working-class shows. To take a production, paying minimum salaries (which should more properly be called expenses) to a town hall costs £30; the takings, charging 1*s.* to 2*s.* 6*d.*, are usually about £15. In many halls otherwise suitable absolute capacity is £20. Clearly this is not a policy that can be pursued indefinitely. The real hope for the "Left Theatre," and for the work that Mr. Brown agrees is so necessary, is to be able to establish a permanent or semi-permanent theatre in a working-class district, run on a repertory basis, and performing, after adequate rehearsal, plays which deal with contemporary issues. But until the problem of raising sufficient guarantees to cover at least the rent is solved, such a scheme can only remain a hope. At the same time it is the answer to Mr. Brown's question as to what will be done if the play competition provides a series of plays worthy of production.

Finally, I should like to take this opportunity of explaining that there has never been any connection between "Left Theatre" and the "Experimental"—now "Studio" Theatre, in Finchley Road. There has not even been any expressed similarity of aim.

BARBARA NIXON

[Mr. Ivor Brown writes: "I am extremely grateful for the useful and detailed information about the Left Theatre, whose work in the Town Halls I mentioned. We now know the exact difficulties to be faced, and I am glad that my article evoked this record of achievement and statement of accounts. As to the last point, my article was called 'Left Theatres,' and the Experimental Theatre is surely 'Left' artistically and in general intention, even if it does not meet the exact political standards of the group for which Miss Nixon speaks."—ED., *N.S. & N.*]

AN ANTI-WAR CONFERENCE

SIR,—We attended the "consultative" conference of the B.A.W.M., held at Bermondsey on Sunday last, as we are, like so many people, anxious to support any organisation which is concerned with the war danger. It was in many ways one of the most disappointing conferences we have ever attended, because of the complete failure to even realise, not to speak of facing, issues as they are to-day. The immediate and central issue as we see it, is that Germany has a large enough air force to strike at any other European country, including this country. This air force is controlled at present by people who have shown themselves ruthless, and who may become desperate, because of the economic and social conditions of that country. They may be prepared to use this weapon as a means of intimidating any country, including Great Britain, which opposes their expansionist policy—a policy which capitalist interests in that country make vitally necessary to its existence. What are we as Socialists to do in the face of this?

As we have said, the conference never asked itself this question. The Communist leaders (and others) concentrated upon defences of Russian foreign policy. In a gathering of this kind, this should have been unnecessary. They took it for granted that this country is inveterately opposed to Russia, which, even from the point of view of capitalist tactics, is not true. Other speakers took the soft option by reciting the stale commonplaces which they have learned "in the era of bourgeois pacificism," or in describing hole-in-the-corner activities against "the preparations of the warmongers." One well-known speaker claimed that the recent strike at an aircraft factory, which, as everyone knows, was over the question of Trade Union principles, was in fact an anti-war effort. This and other delusions about the strength of anti-Nazi efforts in Germany was typical of the ostrich-like attitude which prevailed.

We suggest, however, that the main object of the conference was sound, even if the results were disappointing. This object was to protest against the White Paper, and to urge the National Council of Labour to call a special delegate conference, as it is empowered to do, on the war danger. We suggest that all members of affiliated organisations shall move at their branches that this be done and see to it that the delegates chosen will have the courage and ability to see that the conference faces up to the real and difficult issues which events are creating, and to demand such revisions of Labour's war and foreign policy as are necessary in the light of these events.

TWO MEMBERS OF THE LABOUR PARTY

A VIENNA DEMONSTRATION

SIR,—Your correspondent in Vienna, in his interesting article published on March 30th, which I have only just read, states that on February 12th, as part of the Communist-Socialist celebrations, the light was cut off in several suburbs of Vienna for three hours during the evening. This is not exactly true—such action was all but impossible, as the Government had put armed guards in the power-houses. But what did happen was even more significant, as a demonstration of working-class solidarity: the inhabitants of the proletarian suburbs, such as Floridsdorf, following an appeal broadcast by the United Front leaders, *refused to use* electric light during three hours of the evening, with the result that the house fronts in a vast number of streets and squares were completely dark, as if no one were living there.

In several provincial towns, however, such as Ried and Leoben, the electric light was actually cut off, and the darkness effectively used by the Communists and Socialists for demonstrations, scattering of leaflets, and sudden illumination of revolutionary inscriptions. AN ENGLISHMAN IN VIENNA

Vienna.

THE DEATH PENALTY

SIR,—The comment of "Critic" on the campaign of Mrs. Van Der Elst contains a passage in which he implies that the propaganda of the Howard League and my Council appeals only to the converted. This view is wrong. The propaganda meetings we carry on persistently in all parts of the country at which the case for abolition is effectively presented, demonstrate clearly that public support can be and is continually being won among those who have previously been opposed or indifferent to abolition.

Indeed, our experience is that the statistical facts and rational arguments on which we have built our case, in their total effect, are so strong as usually to overwhelm the opposition. There is no doubt that if our campaign had at its command the ample monetary resources being expended in this new campaign, it could "excite the interest of the public" in equal if not greater degree, and what is more important, could *retain* the interest by founding it securely on reason, and the logic of an unanswerable case. JOHN PATON,

National Council for the Abolition of the Death Penalty, Secretary

Parliament Mansions, Victoria Street, S.W.1.

[Critic writes: "Why are excellent people so often lacking in humour? I said that they did invaluable work and of course agree that it is the reasonable and steady appeal which sustained

the case. But that is no reason why I should not point to the human animal's avidity for the spectacular."—Ed. *N.S. & N.*]

FULL CHURCHES

SIR,—I suppose it is inevitable and unimportant that the highbrow unbeliever should go on making sweeping statements about the failure of the Church, etc., but I am provoked to wonder whether such remarks as "the churches empty, Sunday-school scholars melt away, doctrinal disputes fill the ecclesiastical air" (in a review in last week's NEW STATESMAN AND NATION) have *any* basis of first-hand knowledge.

Has the writer ever visited a church or counted a Sunday-school, or watched an average congregation indulging in doctrinal disputes? There are, unfortunately, many unvigorous churches, with elderly or ineffective clergy; but, in far more cases, a vigorous vicar and his alive congregation are the best (often the only) servants of a needy and neglected set of people. This is certainly true of the West Riding, where the churches nearly always take a lead in every form of social service—and incidentally they are *not* empty; while the Sunday-schools are full to overflowing, and doctrinal dispute is conspicuously absent in the smoke-filled air! A. M. WILKINSON

5 South Parade, Wakefield.

Miscellany

UNSUCCESS

ELIAS SERGEI PEPLOF and his wife Cleopatra Petrovna stood listening at a door, straining their ears to hear a love scene that was going on in the next room between their daughter Natasha and Shupkin, the district schoolmaster.

"He bites!" whispered Peplof, fidgeting with impatience and rubbing his hands. "Listen Petrovna, as soon as they speak of love, take down the ikon from the wall and let us go in and bless them, a blessing with the ikon is sacred and can't be disputed even by law."

Meantime behind the door Shupkin was saying to Natasha as he struck a match on the seat of his checked trousers:

"But I've never written you any letters in my life . . ."

"Pooh!" exclaimed the girl with an affected little laugh, looking at herself repeatedly in the mirror, "as if I didn't know your handwriting. I recognised it at once. But you know, you really are very funny; you are a writing master and your own writing is nothing but a scrawl. How can you teach it if you write so badly yourself?"

"H'm, that doesn't matter. In writing the important thing is that the children are not distracted. A knock with a ruler on the head of one or on the knees of another . . . *that's* writing . . . a trifling matter. For example, Necrasof may or may not have been a good author, but really and truly how did he write? His handwriting is reproduced in the editions of his works."

"Necrasof is one thing and you are another . . . ." (sighing). "I would like to marry Necrasof, he would write verses for me."

"Oh, I can write verses for you too if you wish. . . ."

"And what would you write about?"

"What about? About love, sentiment, about your eyes . . . if you read them they would make you dizzy and tears come to your eyes. But if I really wrote you some poetic verses would you allow me to kiss that little hand of yours?"

"But why so much fuss? Here you are . . . you can kiss it now."

Shupkin's eyes widened. He rushed to Natasha and seized the plump little hand that smelt of scented soap.

"Get down the image at once!" whispered Peplof, poking his wife in the ribs. He grew pale, and buttoning up his coat opened the door.

"Children!" he spluttered, raising his hands and blinking his eyes as though he were weeping, "God bless you! live, fructify, multiply!"

"I, too, bless you," added the mother weeping, "be happy, my dears. Oh, you are taking away my only treasure," she said turning to Shupkin. "Love my daughter and be good to her."

Shupkin, dumbfounded, stood gasping. This assault had been so sudden and unexpected that he could not utter a single word.

"It's a trap. They've caught me," he thought nearly fainting, "little mouse there is no escape," and he obediently lowered his head as if to say, "take me, I am defeated."

"Bless you, bless you," repeated the father in tears. "Natasha, my daughter, stand beside him. Petrovna, hand me the ikon."

But suddenly the father stopped weeping and his face contorted with rage.

"The devil take it!" he shouted angrily, "is this the ikon?"

"Good heavens . . . !"

What had happened? The writing master cautiously raised his eyes and saw that he was saved. In her haste the mother had seized the portrait of a ballet dancer instead of the ikon.

Old Peplof and his wife Cleopatra Petrovna with the portrait in her hands, disconcerted, did not know what to do, and the writing master, profiting by the general confusion, hastily took to his heels. ANTON TCHEHOV

(*Translated by Marjorie Hatton.*)

LAMBKINS AND LIONS

Sanders of the River is not only by far the best British talkie to date, but also, by any standards, an admirable film. And *Escape Me Never*, an entirely different type of picture, joins it at once in the same international class. We have Paul Czinner and Elisabeth Bergner to thank for this strengthening of our bid for film fame. *Sanders*, directed by a Hungarian, photographed for the most part by a Frenchman, starring a North American negro, including in its cast a dusky, transatlantic cutie, and even a Spanish grandee, still contrives to be almost as British as Australian apples or Lady Houston: after all, it was made in British studios on the banks of the great, green, greasy Thames River, and under the Union Jack in Africa; it was inspired by Edgar Wallace's novel; aided in production by British Colonial administrators; and it is fortified by the fine subdued acting of Leslie Banks. True-blue in his tactful handling of the white man's burden (kicking the nigger with a straight bat, my dear feller), if Zoltan Korda politely raises his British-made *zylinderhut* to us—well, why not? We need not carp at an evidence of imperialist propaganda in *Sanders* (it is slight, and as sound as propaganda, always lop-sided, ever can be); instead we must applaud an impressive new standard of entertainment on the British screen.

The debt of *Sanders of the River* to the Dark Continent is enormous—as it should be. But after this main appeal to the eye—the appeal, direct and dazzling, of African dances, shapes and faces—the remaining ingredients are all of equal excellence: the camera-work, the music, Paul Robeson's voice, presence and facial expressions, the dramatic tempo, and—at last!—good cutting. Though it may be an error of taste to say so, British films are ordinarily made by men who, if they know anything at all about cutting, apparently Know Too Much about Death and Broadcasting House to understand lighting. Here are two films that are beautifully and visibly lit, and ably and imaginatively "cut." The Kordas, admittedly, have always had eyes to see; *Sanders*, which could have been shortened with advantage by about ten minutes' showing, could not, in the film sense, have been better "cut"—nor, praise be to Perinal, could it have been better photographed.

Lac aux Dames, the French film version of Vicki Baum's novel, was a sad disappointment. One rushed to see Simonne Simon, so attractive in "stills," and a film that had apparently

proved popular on the Continent. One would still rush to see Simonne Simon . . . but oh, that her plump, appealing little person had been saved, at all costs, from a fate worse than Hollywood! Fräulein Baum's talent is for a neat amassing of romantic detail: her plot had been patted and prodded to make a film—but no film came of it. The icing-sugar of the Baum love-scenes had all flaked off, because love's young dream cannot be carried *bodily* from the printed page on to the screen, in Tobis-clanged words and close-ups. The result was diffusion, triviality, and nothing that recalled the true French style of cinema—so seldom important, yet never pretentious, unbalanced or dreary: nothing except the rippling brilliance of some of the camera-work, the wistful chic of Simonne herself, and a fleck or two of characteristic comedy, provided by an old man and a child. The hero's name was Erik, and the whole film dwindled dishearteningly, little by little.

Royal Cavalcade is a "proudly presented" Jubilee film which, first publicly shown last night, will be generally released on May 6th. Its authors have cleverly welded the story of the last twenty-five years into a "screen play" by the amiable device of hitching it all on to a single wandering penny. Fresh from the Mint in 1911, it repeatedly buys "news" at moments of crisis; as a lovers' keepsake, drops from stiffening international fingers into Flanders' mud; serves as a symbol of stability and, finally, in a Beefeater's palm, links the Crown Jewels with the pageantry of the past. Astonishing to compare the cheering crowds of 1914 with the ignorant savages of Korda's film-epic of Empire: their frenzied war-dance, no more sensible, is so far less beautiful. What is the King's first inheritance on his Coronation Day, according to this picture? The big guns of a man-of-war and the commentator's exultant voice: "The greatest fleet the world has ever known!" What then the final touch of hope and glory? Our penny dissolves into a succession of rapid glimpses of the past: cavalry, in changing uniforms, always cantering over the crest of a hill, while those same richly revolting tones can hardly keep pace with the list of their victories. Necessarily tragic, remote and curious (from Suffragettes through Versailles to Unemployment), this news-reel of the immediate past is interesting, terribly interesting.

Escape Me Never barely makes sense—but it makes a good film, and a fine opportunity for a full-dress display of all Miss Bergner's artifice and artistry. What more could one want? Good direction, and best-quality support from the rest of the cast. We get all that: flowing photography, smooth continuity, only slight emotional tag-ends in the action—and Miss Bergner to scamper and stare through sunshine and sorrow, and to capture all the nuances in between; in fact, to score all the points, hitting either fair and square or below the belt. She is everything, in the course of this film, from angel to zany. Perhaps it's no secret by now that she is either a great or an immeasurably great actress. Measure for measure, it's a fine film.

JOHN MARKS

THE COMING OPERA SEASON

THE annual season of international opera at Covent Garden begins this year on Monday, April 29th, and will last until June 17th, when it will be followed by a season of Russian Ballet, as it was last year. It is decribed in the Covent Garden prospectus on this occasion as a "Wagner and Rossini Festival," although happily four other composers also appear in the repertory, namely, Puccini, who will be represented by *La Bohème*; Borodine—whose *Prince Igor* will be given with the assistance, I take it, of the Russian Ballet in the great scene of the Tartar camp; Bizet—whose *Carmen* will be revived; and Weinberger, a contemporary composer whose *Schwanda*, given for the first time last year, proved popular with the public on account of its spectacular interest, conscious but still more unconscious humour, and commonplace music.

This is not a bad selection. *La Bohème* is a masterpiece in its way and if well sung is always worth hearing; *Carmen* is, of course, a still greater work, and as it is quite a long time since it was last heard at Covent Garden, ought to be a real attraction, while *Prince Igor* is one of the best of Russian operas. As for the Wagner and Rossini festival there will be the usual two cycles of the "Ring," and, in addition, *Lohengrin* and *Tristan und Isolde*; the latter will be conducted, I understand, by Furtwängler, which will add greatly to its interest, since it will be the first time that Dr. Furtwängler has conducted at Covent Garden and his rendering of *Tristan und Isolde* is famous abroad.

For many music lovers, however, it is the Rossini part of the "festival" which is likely to prove the most attractive, and this will certainly be in the hands of Sir Thomas Beecham who revived with much success *La Cenerentola* ("Cinderella") last year and will repeat the performance this year. In addition, he is reviving for the first time another once famous Rossini opera, *L'Italiana in Algeri*, which is an earlier work than *La Cenerentola*, having been composed in 1813 when Rossini was only twenty-one years old.

One great improvement, which I have advocated for a long time, has been brought about this year, and that is the abolishing of the division of the Covent Garden season into two separate parts, German and Italian, and of the practice of playing the whole of the German repertory through first before beginning on the Italian operas or operas of other than German origin. This year the season will open with *Lohengrin* and after that there will be the two cycles of the "Ring" interspersed with other operas so that one will have some relief from the "damnable iteration" of Teutonic musical heavy-handedness which makes so many of our younger musicians think that Wagner is more monotonous than he is. Although a number of the German singers who have become well known in London during the past ten years through their admirable performances in the "Ring" have been re-engaged—Lotte Lehmann, Frida Leider, Elizabeth Ohns, Eduard Habich and Alexander Kipnis, for example—there are also some artists coming this season who have not been here recently, conspicuous among them being that magnificent singer, Rudolf Bockelmann. In *La Cenerentola* Conchita Supervia, who was such a success last year, will reappear, but there are several newcomers among the Italian singers, and this will also add interest to the season. Vincenzo Bellezza will return to conduct the Italian operas, and the producers are Dr. Otto Erhardt and Mr. Charles Moor. The British singers include Arnold Mathers, Henry Wendon and Heddle Nash.

A month after the beginning of the Covent Garden season Mr. John Christie will open his opera house at Glyndebourne for the Mozart Festival, with Fritz Busch as conductor and Carl Ebert as producer, the same as last year. The season is to be twice as long as before, namely, from May 29th to June 29th, and four Mozart operas will be produced, starting with *Die Zauberflöte*. The two fine productions which made such a sensation last year, *Figaro* and *Cosi fan Tutte*, will be repeated with the same casts except that on this occasion the Bartolo will be Ronald Stear and the Don Alfonso, John Brownlee. If the productions of *Zauberflöte* and *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* are on the same level as those of the other two operas last year, music-lovers have something to look forward to. It has never been my good fortune to hear an adequate production of *Zauberflöte* and I expect to find an entirely fresh impression made by this work if it gets a performance on the same level as last year's *Cosi fan Tutte*. Then we shall hear no more nonsense about the incomprehensibility of the libretto, but will see realised the fact that this libretto suited Mozart's purpose as completely as the libretto of *Cosi fan Tutte* did. In both these operas music and text are united into something one and indivisible, and *Zauberflöte* is no more incoherent than *Cosi fan Tutte* is immoral, though both are fantastic and unconventional.

I have been told that Mr. John Christie is enlarging his beautiful little opera house. I hope this is true. As it was it only held three hundred people, but although I am all in

favour of small opera houses, especially for the finer musical creations in opera—such as the works of Monteverde, Gluck, Purcell, Mozart—yet a capacity of three hundred is unnecessarily and uneconomically small. In my opinion, from six to eight hundred would be better even for such a site as Mr. Christie's which one does not want to see made so large as to flood the countryside with opera audiences. With a capacity of three hundred the price has to be made extremely high, for to pay thirty shillings for a seat certainly is outside most people's capacity. It is, of course, true that many people fritter away in a week or two of miscellaneous amusement as large a sum as this, if not larger, and if one regarded the outlay in proportion to the value received it is really cheap even at thirty shillings. One may go to London theatres weekly for ten years and to London cinemas weekly for twenty years and never in all that time get an experience such as we had at Glyndebourne last year, so really one could honestly advise people to save up their money specially for a unique day at Glyndebourne. Nevertheless, it would be better if Mr. Christie could accommodate six hundred people and if he could make some arrangement on the lines of Mr. Samuel Courtauld's Concert Club whereby people who really cannot under any circumstances afford to pay these high prices could obtain series of tickets for the whole season in quantities at special rates.

I cannot help wishing that the Governors of the Stratford Memorial Theatre would invite Mr. Christie to take his company there at the conclusion of the Shakespeare Festival or even during the Shakespeare Festival, and give part if not the whole of their Mozart programme. It would add enormously to the interest of the Stratford Memorial Theatre, which, after all, has been internationally subsidised and yet lacks at present the one virtue of being a thoroughly live artistic enterprise suitable to the needs of the present day. It is too late to do anything of the sort this year, but something will have to be done sooner or later, to get the Stratford Theatre out of its present nineteenth-century rut and make it correspond to the demands of the age, with which at present it has hardly any relation. In the meantime, however, music-lovers in London will have a plentiful operatic fare during the next few months and some of it seems likely to be of extraordinarily fine quality.

W. J. TURNER

PLAYS AND PICTURES

"The Old Ladies" at the New

The theme of unregarded age in corners thrown is not obviously a dramatic one, nor, at first sight, are Mr. Walpole's three Old Ladies in their apartment house material enough for three acts. One of them, it is true, is a grotesque, whose blowsy flamboyance promises an opportunity for great acting. The others are types, delicately and carefully drawn, but familiar in their essence to any audience of ordinary sensibility; and in this context, mere authenticity is not enough. Miss Jean Cadell's infallible art can reveal in a single twitter the nervousness, the poverty, the loneliness and the sentimentality of May Beringer. But she must go on twittering, up and down her limited scale, long after our pleasure of recognition is exhausted: and, however much our academic sympathies are stirred, in sober fact we are bored and irritated by her. Miss Mary Jerrold, less handicapped by the charming, sensible, kindly personality of Lucy Amorest, is a pleasant person to have about the stage, but her part in the main action is a small one and again we are conscious of the underlinings and repetitions in Mr. Rodney Ackland's adaptation. Remains Miss Edith Evans, in a part to tear a cat in. Her Agatha Payne is something more than a greedy, obsessed sensationalist. She is at once a gipsy and a queen, a bloated harridan and a romantic dreamer. Her desire for Miss Beringer's piece of amber once aroused, she pursues it with a cold ferocity which is the uglier for its childish inspiration. There were occasions in Miss Evans's performance—particularly when she threw realism to the wind and roared out her passion in a voice which belied her age and infirmity—when the part seemed to topple momentarily, but her powerful influence, even when she broods alone in her room above, retrieves an evening threatened with a certain aridity. The set is an interesting one—three rooms and a staircase which, under Gielgud's masterly production, becomes a powerful instrument of dramatic tension. So admirably does he seize his opportunities, so brilliantly does the company act, that to complain may seem ungenerous, but it must be insisted that the play would be a finer artistic achievement if it were shorter by half an hour.

Owing to an error we stated last week that "Worse Things Happen at Sea" was at the Royalty Theatre. This play is being performed at the St. James's.

THE COMING WEEK

FRIDAY, April 12th—
"Le Million," Everyman Cinema Theatre.

SATURDAY, April 13th—
British Women's Symphony Orchestra, Queen's Hall, 3.

SUNDAY, April 14th—
S. K. Ratcliffe on "America's Next Stage: Progressive Democracy or Fascism," Conway Hall, 11.

MONDAY, April 15th—
Opening of Shakespeare Dramatic Festival Season, Stratford-upon-Avon. (Till Mid-September.)
"Le Quatorze Juillet," Everyman Cinema Theatre.
London Symphony Orchestra, "St. Matthew Passion," Queen's Hall, 8.
Mr. Neil Lawson on "The German People's Court and the Novel Doctrine of 'Intellectual Responsibility'," Conway Hall, 8.15.

TUESDAY, April 16th—
Flower Show, Daffodils, Horticultural Hall.
S. R. Wood and G. E. Moore on "Conditions in the Gold Coast," Friends House, Euston Road, 1.20.
London Film Institute Society, Gerald Sanger on "News Reels—New and Old," illustrated with films, Film House, Wardour Street, 7.30.
Frank Horrabin on "The War Danger," Itrose Hall, Mornington Crescent, 7.45.
Concert of Music by Bach and Handel, under the direction of Arnold Goldsbrough, Queen Mary Hall, Gt. Russell Street, 8.30.

THURSDAY, April 18th—
"Sous les Toits de Paris," Everyman Cinema Theatre.

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Current Literature

BOOKS IN GENERAL

IN *Beddoes An Anthology*, published three years ago, Mr. F. L. Lucas has written the best appreciation of the poet I have read. Naturally he recapitulates the tragic story of Beddoes' life which was told by Kelsall, his friend to whom we owe the publication of most of his poems, and by Gosse who first revealed the facts of his suicide and his infatuation for Degen the young German baker, but Mr. Lucas also gives us an extraordinarily just estimate of Beddoes as a poet.

> The anthologists have merely concentrated on a few of his lyrics that have the sort of prettiness dear to their pussy-cat mentalities. As a lyric poet, Beddoes can be lovely; but it is in his verse dialogue that he shows his strength.

And in an illuminating comparison of the blank verse of Beddoes with that of Tennyson, Mr. Lucas speaks of Tennyson's lines as being written by a poetical typewriter that rings a bell at the end of each line, "whereas Beddoes has the sinuous onward gliding of a living adder through the grass." Yet it seems to me that Mr. Lucas has missed the most astonishing thing of all about Beddoes. In his preface to his admirable anthology he says:

> His best poetry lies scattered through those chaotic plays which he found it so easy to begin, so hard to finish. Even when he did finish them, their value lies not in their dramatic qualities as wholes, but in their splendid moments.

Until last week there can have been few persons who would have questioned a judgment which seems so eminently reasonable. But then I think neither Mr. Lucas nor anyone else had seen one of these chaotic unfinished plays well acted, and it is impossible to be sure of the qualities of a play until it has been seen upon the stage. Indeed, there is nothing like seeing a play which one has only read to reveal the threadbare poverty of one's imagination. Wycherley is a case in point. Who by merely reading it could guess that *The Plain Dealer* was admirably entertaining and not heavy and trite and obvious? For Wycherley, an inferior writer and a most wretched poet, is the equal, the superior, of Congreve as a dramatist. He had that mysterious gift, a sense of the stage. When it is read in the library, a play is as flat as the pages on which it is printed; it becomes three dimensional in the mouths of the actors on the stage. Yet the difference is far greater than that produced by stereoscopic vision. For it is difficult when reading verse to judge of its dramatic pace. (I do not mean its metrical rapidity). But the greatest handicap of all is one's common sense. It was her common sense which made Queen Elizabeth refuse to allow a shadow to be painted down one side of her nose in her portrait, since she could see in her looking-glass that both sides of it were equally clean, and there is no more fatal obstacle to aesthetic enjoyment than such common sense prejudice. It is even more disastrous to the appreciation of literature than it is to that of painting. Mr. F. L. Lucas is far too experienced a critic to let his common sense interfere with his pleasure in an El Greco because the figure is distorted, yet it has betrayed him unawares in judging one of the poets he most admires, and whom he understands perhaps better than any critic. Common sense tells us that the plays are chaotic fragments, that their stories are fantastic and confused, and that the psychology of the characters is inconsistent. Therefore it says we must not judge them as dramatic wholes.

* * *

Mr. Nugent Monck produced *The Second Brother* by Beddoes last week at the Maddermarket theatre, Norwich, and my common-sense judgment was shattered. For the production revealed an extraordinary fact: Beddoes is a master of the theatre and must have known perfectly well what effects he was producing when he wrote his chaotic plays. Although none of his work was acted so that he cannot have learnt by trial and error, this is not so surprising as it would seem at first sight. We know from the account of his school fag that

> During his stay at the Charterhouse he made himself master of all the best English dramatists, from Shakespeare's time or before it, to the plays of the day. He liked acting and was a good judge of it, and used to give apt though burlesque imitations of the popular actors, particularly of Kean and Macready.

We know from his letters that he was steeped in the drama of Webster, Marlowe, Massinger and Marston, that he frequented Drury Lane when he was in London, and that he hired the theatre at Zurich for one night so as to produce a performance of *Henry IV* Part I with the young German baker, Degen, in the part of Hotspur. Alas, we shall never know what that was like! But at the Norwich Maddermarket, *The Second Brother* was as fine a performance as one could hope to see. Mr. Monck trains his amateurs to speak verse perfectly; one can hear every word and the actors understand what they are saying and speak their lines as though they really meant them. There were many moments of exquisite beauty as when Valeria describes her girl attendant's first welcoming of love:

> How thou art like the daisy in Noah's meadow,
> On which the foremost drop of rain fell warm
> And soft at evening: so the little flower
> Wrapped up its leaves, and shut the treacherous water
> Close to the golden welcome of its breast,
> Delighting in the touch of that which led
> The shower of oceans, in whose billowy drops
> Tritons and lions of the sea were warring. . . .

Or when Melchior, the gaoler, tells Valeria, his prisoner, that:

> The unfashionable worm
> Respectless of the crown-illumined brow,
> The cheek's bewitchment, or the sceptred clench,
> With no more eyes than Love, creeps courtier-like,
> On his thin belly, to his food—no matter
> How clad or nicknamed it might strut above,
> What age or sex—it is his dinner-time.

It was not surprising that Act I Sc. 2 in which Orazio is ruined and turned out of his palace by his father-in-law was magnificently dramatic. What was remarkable was that, on the stage, the story was *not* ridiculous but absolutely absorbing, and its development intensely exciting and not obscure. The scene in the dungeon between Orazio and his brother was perhaps the best thing in the play. There is no good denying that we were in trouble at the end—for Beddoes breaks off early in Act IV. The ending given us, which had been patched together from *Death's Jest Book* and other plays, was a good deal better than might have been expected, but it was more normal than Beddoes can have intended. The imprisoned lovers, who each believe the other is dead, are restored to each other's arms and the Second Brother, Marcello, resigning the Dukedom, reveals himself as a leper and stalks off rattling his warning clapper and holding out his beggar's bowl. This was splendidly dramatic. The fault was not the change in Marcello's character but that everything implied by his instructions to his factotum was left out:

> When the fools are ripe
> And gaping to the kernel, thou shalt steal
> And lay the egg of my divinity
> In their fermenting sides. . . .

The acting could hardly have been better. Orazio was perhaps the best, while a personal likeness in the slow and thoughtful manner of Marcello's speech to Mr. T. S. Eliot inspired awe and respect. The small Elizabethan style of theatre and the excellent simplicity of the scenery were exactly right for a play by a poet whom Lytton Strachey called the Last Elizabethan. But there are many small theatres in London and it is to be hoped that Mr. Monck will bring his Norwich amateurs to London. Perhaps they could give a performance for the Phoenix Society which promises to revive from its ashes in the autumn. The old Phoenix had all its successes with Restoration plays and Elizabethan comedies. Mr. Monck could show them how to act tragedy and speak poetry.

DAVID GARNETT

NEW NOVELS

Pylon. By WILLIAM FAULKNER. *Chatto and Windus.* 7s. 6d.

Jason the Magnificent. By MAURICE HANLINE. *Constable.* 7s. 6d.

This Bed Thy Centre. By PAMELA JOHNSON. *Chapman and Hall.* 7s. 6d.

Call Back Yesterday. By GERAINT GOODWIN. *Cape.* 7s. 6d.

When a writer is sufficiently established nowadays he is no longer appreciated by the quality of his work. He enters the realm of higher criticism. Mirsky (I was a Prince!) discusses his attitude to the social revolution. Wyndham Lewis ties an offensive label round his neck—Fascist, dumb ox, childmind, simpleton—and tries to drown him in a sack. Gertrude Stein accuses him of dark crimes against the spirit and of smelling badly. Only his personal behaviour and the political implication of his books are mentioned, and nobody alludes to the one fact of supreme importance about him: how well he writes. For this reason writers, like music-hall turns, are often mentioned in couples, Hemingway and Faulkner, Firbank and Huxley, Eliot and Pound, Joyce and Stein. If people realised they were saying Paul and Barnabas it would be all right, but they don't. They confuse a certain specious similarity in treatment with a resemblance in degree. In my opinion America possesses one great writer, Hemingway; another who, if he could resolve some mysterious equation inside him, would be great, Scott Fitzgerald; several others of enormous competence and talent, headed by William Faulkner and Dashiel Hammett, and a tail that produces the most entertaining and readable trick stuff—the postman with his double knock, Bessie Cotter in her shift, the trapeze virtuoso, etc.

But Hemingway is a great writer: I can think of no other novelist living who unites to such purity of emotional contest such mastery of form.

And this is where Faulkner fails. In his most ambitious moments the chisel skids and slithers, and the emotion, the intensity he puts into his writing, is often suspect. There's gold in that thar cob! Nevertheless he is among the half-dozen American authors from whom a new book is an event. The morbidity of his imagination is beyond suspicion, he excels above all in combining a passionate hatred of the city, every sputum of which is familiar to him, with an appreciation of everything that is relaxed, corrupt, and phosphorescent in the southern countryside. It was this mingling of the vice of the town with the decay of the country, Pop-eye's city's clothes reflected in the tropical bogwater, that gave *Sanctuary* its extraordinary quality.

The scene of *Pylon* is the Lent carnival in New Orleans. A little troupe of stunt fliers, an aviator, his wife, her lover the parachute jumper, her little boy and their mechanic arrive to risk their lives for a few dollars in the aerial dirt-track. A reporter falls madly in love with them. They seem to him beings from another world, so tough, desperate and uncomplaining. He "moves in on them" with disastrous results. The characters of the flying family are admirably portrayed, their attraction for the reporter is quite understandable, but the reporter himself does not come to life so well. It is a source of major irritation, for instance, that one is never told his name.

The scenes at the aerodrome, however, are highly dramatic. The treatment of the spoken word is masterly, the two or three nights of carnival roll the characters through every combination of love and hate in an inspissated gloom of money, sex, and alcohol: "Yair, I could hear all the long soft waiting sound of all woman-meat in bed behind the curtain." This book, incidentally, brings Faulkner into much closer relation with the accepted modern masters. He has borrowed widely from the crowd scenes in *Ulysses*, one chapter is called "The love song of J. A. Prufrock," and the style, with its rolling turgidity, forced images, and cumbrous and uncouth eye to the main chance—the scarifying of the reader—is often pure Dreisler. I do not see any virtue in the long sentence unless it expresses a genuine nuance of observation or prolonged subtlety of thought. With Faulkner it is simply degenerating into a bad habit:

> Hagood entered stiffly, like an old man, letting himself down into the low seat, whereupon without sound or warning the golf-bag struck him across the head and shoulder with an apparently calculated and lurking viciousness, emitting a series of dry clicks as though produced by the jaws of a beast domesticated though not tamed, half in fun and half in deadly seriousness, like a pet shark.

There are several hundred other sentences which the writer seems to be gabbling through as if himself convinced that they do not come off, but resolved that anyhow it's too late to change. And he uses "immobile" a dozen times; for him it is the sinister epithet; and why not, as in the poem, J. A. Prufrock? And why make five adjectives do the work of one? These are questions one cannot help asking as one reads this work of real power and importance, and wonders why it isn't twenty thousand words shorter. For when this modern Juvenal comes off, how good he is, as in this passage, where the conscious echoes of Eliot and his London suburra are blended with the atmosphere of the tropical creole city which Degas painted, and which was so charmingly described by Hérédia's daughter.

> It would be there—the eternal smell of the coffee, the sugar, the hemp sweating slow iron plates above the forked deliberate brown water and lost, lost, lost all ultimate blue of latitude and horizon; the hot rain gutterful plaiting the eaten heads of shrimp; the ten thousand inescapable mornings wherein ten thousand swinging air-plants stippleprop the soft scrofulous soaring of sweating brick, and ten thousand pairs of splayed brown Leonora feet tiger-barred by jaloused armistice with the invincible sun: the thin black coffee, the myriad fish stewed in a myriad oil—to-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow; not only not to hope, not even to wait: just to endure.

In *Jason the Magnificent* we descend from visiting one of the most complicated and prolific factories of modern prose to a smart little shop-window. Here is a book often sloppy, full of fake sentiment, consistently overwritten, but gay, blue, and scintillating. If it is a first novel, in others the melodrama will fall away and the wit and freshness, the author's psychological justice, be precipitated. Jason is a publisher, not the politic black-hatted English kind, the Anthony Edens of letters. The narrator is in the position of an adaptable and sycophantic young man who is half-ruined and half-created by becoming cupbearer to his hero. Life in the publishing office is one round of cocktails, seductions, and all-night parties in speakeasies. It leaves one with a nostalgia for the lavish, open-handed, hysterical standards of American life:

> Before you came in we were discussing whether to go further with Matthewson. His first novel was swell, but didn't make a dime. The three since then have been lousy. I believe in him. I believe in his future. He's living on the Riviera with a wife and two mistresses. A man must live. He's in to us for five thousand dollars. He wants another thousand. I think we ought to give it him.

Doesn't your mouth water? The only consolation is that this was in 1926, and the boom style of living, with its charming gaiety and vulgarity, is dead as the Black Bottom. Now we all, even publishers, live in slow motion. It is interesting to note the quantities of drink consumed in these two books. Jason drinks a bottle and a half of neat gin at a sitting. Four of the Faulkner characters consume a jug of pure absinthe spiced with an ounce of laudanum. While English drinkers soak and tipple, arguing or remembering their childhood in great houses, the American ideal is to explode into oblivion. We provide the parish priests, they the mystics and martyrs of the new religion. Meanwhile, do not neglect this hardy, restful, and buyable little book.

This Bed Thy Centre is a remarkable English first novel. It describes the life of a group of people in a London suburb, the small shopkeepers, the school teachers, the loose woman of the neighbourhood, the barmaids, the young men, the children. Gradually the central romance emerges, between the town councillor's son and a girl of sixteen. The psychology of all these people, their dialogue and circumstances of living are admirably grasped. Miss Johnson writes with a comprehension and sureness of touch that makes a work like *Enbury Heath* look like a nursery rag-book. Whatever she writes next will be fascinating. Incidentally her characters revolve round the bed and the bottle with the same consistency as Mr. Faulkner's and Mr. Hanline's. They, too, are hurried down this lubrique and adulterate age, only, on account of their poverty and the climate, with considerably less acceleration. The main difference between American and English fiction is one of *tempo*. American prose is faster, that of Mr. Hanline, for instance, without any inverted commas and directions—he said, she said—or barriers between thought and speech, is entirely streamlined. American action is also faster—all is vigour, maturity, dialogue, climax where an English book at the same stage is still concerned with introducing the characters through a series of cumbrous reveries. I do not think the English novel of experience can compete with the American. It is much

better to give it up. The great advantage of the English writer over the American is superior education—what are the masterpieces that the Americans can't copy? *Ulysses*, *The Waves*, *The Flower Beneath the Foot*, *South Wind*, works of imaginative scholarship. How far behind follow Glenway Westcott, Bromfield, Thornton Wilder and Carl Van Vechten!

Call Back Yesterday is an immature and rather hastily put together autobiography with some interesting information about George Moore. The author is revealed as a violent and lyrical young Welshman rather pathetically trying to discover, in being a reporter on a London daily, the dignity and gusto which he demands from living. I liked this book because it is the kind which is almost always rejected by publishers on the grounds of brevity and lack of general interest. Such refusals to conform to type widen exhilaratingly the scope of fiction.

CYRIL CONNOLLY

THE GALLANT MAJOR

Warning Democracy. By C. H. DOUGLAS.

Control and Distribution of Production. By C. H. DOUGLAS.

Economic Democracy. By C. H. DOUGLAS.

Credit Power and Democracy. By C. H. DOUGLAS. *Nott.* 3*s.* 6*d. each.*

Douglas Fallacies. By JOHN LEWIS. *Chapman and Hall.* 3*s.* 6*d.*

Any critic who sets out to anatomise Major Douglas labours under a heavy disadvantage. Either he is not an economist, and so is unused to handling the general concepts of cost and price; or he is, in which case Major Douglas has dealt with him in advance. Has he not repeatedly made it clear to the public that the entire staff of the London School of Economics, to say nothing of other seats of learning, are in the pay of the Bankers, the Powers of Finance, and suborned to impress on the minds of the young the sanctity of the present system? Nor is this the only difficulty. There is also the paralysing obscurity of the Major's style; his maze of unrelated participles, his broken-backed relative clauses, his bewildering transitions from the normal to a special use of the terms of argument. It is a great temptation, considering all these things, to dismiss the social credit scheme without argument, assuming, to save wear and tear, that its general craziness must be self-evident.

But it is not, to many people, self evident at all. Major Douglas has a large if cranky following—and what other economic theorist can boast of a green-shirted army devoted to his ideals? There is, alas, little hope for the intellectual salvation of one seriously bitten by the social credit germ; therefore possible waverers and victims ought to be treated before it gets into their systems.

The essence of the social credit argument is contained in *Economic Democracy* and *Credit Power and Democracy*, published in 1920. Their thesis can be briefly stated as follows. On the productive side, the economic system is highly and increasingly efficient. The distribution side, however, is so badly managed that as a whole the system only functions at 5 per cent. of its capacity or thereabouts. Its weakness lies in a constant deficiency of purchasing power, due to the fact that while "overheads" and raw material payments form part of costs, and therefore of prices, they do not enter into circulation in the form of wages, salaries, and dividends—the so-called "A" payments. They form a separate category, the "B" payments, purchasing power for which is supplied by the banks, without ever reaching the general public. The public is thus constantly being asked to pay out more than it is getting in, stocks of unsold goods constantly accumulate, and the only way out is a policy of export expansion, leading to international commercial rivalry and finally to war. So much for the diagnosis of our troubles. The cure is simple; let each citizen be credited, in respect of each purchase which he makes, with a sum representing the "B" element in its price, this element being averaged out over production in general so as to form a constant percentage. Purchasing power will thus equal prices, and the productive system, hitherto held in leash by the dead hand of the banks, will promptly bring about the true Age of plenty.

Without going into the remarkable details of Major Douglas's proposed credit machinery, originally planned to function in connection with a system of decentralised productive guilds, and without touching on his highly individual views on the potential productivity of industry, one can find here a good deal calling for comment. First, what is this chronic deficiency of purchasing power? Major Douglas is not merely talking about cyclical fluctuations and the monetary disturbances underlying them; his deficiency goes on and on and up and up, continuously and cumulatively. At each stage of production, he says, only a fraction of the costs incurred are distributed in wages and salaries; the rest goes back to the producers of raw material or semi-manufacture, or in rent and interest. This is true enough, but what does it matter? Cost to the payer is income to the recipient, whether it be paid as wages or as rent; when all the factors of production have been paid for, whether labour power, land or credit, their owners have at the appropriate stages drawn their incomes up to the total represented by the price. Provided there is not, as during the depression phase of a cycle, an accumulation of idle deposits, no deficiency arises during the process. One need only consider the fact that, according to Major Douglas, no deficiency would arise if a single producer carried through each process from start to finish, while the mere fact of the process being divided into stages must result even if the final product is sold at a lower price—in a deficiency of 50 per cent. or more. It is melancholy that so fantastic an argument should seriously require refuting.

Nevertheless, let it be admitted that the pricing system is imperfect; whether because the variable process of saving upsets its delicate balance, or because the inequality of incomes causes a chronic tendency to over capitalisation, or because the banking system is insufficiently responsive to technical or psychological change. All these views can be reasonably upheld. But will Major Douglas's scheme of social dividends on purchases remedy the periodic deficiencies which we know to exist? Straightforward inflation will do it for the moment, of course, at a price which Major Douglas fully recognises to be exorbitant in the long run. On the other hand, according to his arguments the issue of consumers' credits constitutes not an increase in currency but a lowering of the price level; goods change hands at a figure effectively lowered for the purchaser, and the credits, placed to his account at the bank under a Government guarantee, become in some manner automatically liquidated. Much controversy has failed to elucidate

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either the machinery of issue or the nature of the liquidating process. Nor has Major Douglas ever succeeded in finding an effective answer to the criticism that, while prices may at the inception of the scheme remain the same on paper, the increased demand resulting from the increase in effective purchasing power is bound to force them up as soon as the first cycle of transactions has been completed.

The social credit scheme is in fact merely a roundabout and administratively complicated form of inflation, certain to cause the same dislocating results as a direct watering of the currency. But what is the use of saying so? The NEW STATESMAN AND NATION, with its Fabian background, is in the eyes of all loyal social creditors a mere venial tool in the hands of the money power; and that is that.

The same rejoinder would be made to the author of *Douglas Fallacies*, who tackles the Major from the orthodox Marxist point of view. When Greek joins Greek, then comes a pretty tug of war indeed; but the result in this case, except for those who can swallow Marx's economics whole, is confusion worse confounded. Mr. Lewis has written a bright little book, supplying plenty of ammunition for the Labour benches of local Mock Parliaments, which are invariably beset with at least one Douglasite.

It is all a great pity; so much energy run to waste, so many reams of paper, so many gallons of ink, devoted to clouding issues and dissipating zeal. Major Douglas may be a crank, but it is impossible to dislike him; both in his earlier works and in the reprinted lectures which compose *Warning Democracy* and *Control and Distribution of Production* there emerges a character full of generous indignation, human sympathy and courage; a lover of liberty and a democrat to the core. There are too few men to whom the freedom of thought and speech won by nineteenth-century democracy, and the economic freedom denied by it to the majority, are united in one paramount ideal, to be passionately pursued and passionately defended. It is hardly less than tragic that in his battle against the twentieth-century Leviathan this enthusiastic St. George should carry a lance of such shoddy timber, a sword of such base metal, and a banner with such a very strange device.

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A FRIENDSHIP

Paxton and the Bachelor Duke. By VIOLET MARKHAM. *Hodder and Stoughton.* 20s.

This is the story of a queer friendship between two strongly contrasted characters. The sixth Duke of Devonshire was a most complicated man: he combined a Renaissance Prince's appetite for splendour with the scruples of an Evangelical hypochondriac. Something, in fact, of the Duc de Guermantes, something of Dr. Arnold, and something perhaps of Amiel. He was the son of Duchess Georgiana, and like many other sons of especially beautiful and brilliant mothers, he seems never to have found any other woman worthy of his love. At the age of thirty-five he wandered from his Palladian villa at Chiswick into the neighbouring gardens of the Horticultural Society, where he saw a nice-looking gardener's boy at work. He talked to him, discovered his name was Joseph Paxton, and immediately appointed him head gardener at Chatsworth. Paxton was twenty-three at the time, and quickly assumed the duties, not only of head gardener, but of agent and general adviser. He travelled all over Europe with the Duke, and became his most intimate, indeed his only, friend. The Duke had a mistress, but the only person beside Paxton for whom he seems to have felt any romantic affection was Czar Nicholas I. Fortunately, this gardener boy was a character not out of Proust, but out of Samuel Smiles. Honest, industrious and devotedly loyal, he was intent equally upon improving his own education and his patron's properties. He soon infected the dilettante Duke with his own passion for waterworks and rare plants, and Chatsworth was embellished with an arboretum, a variety of fountains, and above all with conservatories or "stoves" unsurpassed in their magnificence. There is in this book an amusing account of a visit made to Woburn, the property of a rival Duke. Here is Paxton's comment:

> What do you think Old John Bedford has been at; why, making an arboretum this winter in imitation of the one at Chatsworth. It will be a miserable failure. This is not all; the old codger has had Sir Jeffery Wyatville from London to plan a stove! I suppose they are jealous of us: their stove will be on a par with their arboretum.

And here is the Duke's:

> Went to see Woburn. Mr. Fowles is a very consequential, stupid fellow, very different from my gardener. The pinetum is a ridiculous failure, little worth seeing here.

Paxton had married a niece of the Chatsworth housekeeper, a woman who proved a model of the Victorian virtues. As her husband's responsibilities grew, she shared his work, keeping accounts and supervising the work at Chatsworth in his absence. She had a shrewd eye for business, always turned first to the financial pages of the *Times*, and with her help Paxton gradually acquired a comfortable fortune, largely by speculation in railways. But to his dismay he was taken away for long periods for travel with the Duke. On one occasion they reached Malta, and the Duke took it into his head to push farther East. Paxton wanted to return.

> In vain did I represent the urgent business that calls me at home, and how well he might spare me, going as he was in a Government boat. His Grace replied nearly as follows, word for word: "I have longed all my life to see Greece and Constantinople. Here I am now at Malta, and a good offer presents itself for my going. If you strongly object to my going, I will not go at all, but all my after life it will be a source of regret, and I shall reproach you for having prevented me from accomplishing a long-cherished wish; but," he added, very feelingly, "I am sorry to keep you so long from your family and I hope God will protect them until you return."

Of course Paxton went, and was appropriately impressed by the Parthenon and St. Sophia. He had taste as well as intelligence.

Twelve years later he became one of the most celebrated men in England. The Prince Consort's plans for a Great Exhibition were hanging fire, largely because the public objected to the erection of a huge, solid, and expensive building in Hyde Park. At the last moment Paxton had an idea; why not house the Exhibition in a gargantuan conservatory? The plan was realised with triumphant success, the Duke was superlatively proud of the genius he had befriended, and the Queen graciously conferred on Paxton a knighthood. What hand Sir James Barry, the last great English architect, had in the eventual building remains obscure. Paxton afterwards was employed as an architect by members of the Rothschild family; and it is regrettable that Miss Violet Markham in her admirable book does not include photographs of the results, Mentmore in Buckinghamshire, Ferrières, and a house near Geneva.

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A plan of Paxton's, which was never realised, was for making a Great Victorian Way round London, a sort of Inner Circle made of glass, an arcade, in fact, 11½ miles long, containing shops and light railway lines. He was now a leading public figure, a friend of George Stephenson, Douglas Jerrold, Mark Lemon, and other distinguished Victorians. He even had a finger in the Crimea pie, organising a corps of navvies to help in the construction of roads round Sebastopol. And he became Liberal M.P. for Coventry. But he continued his Chatsworth work until the Duke died in 1858. Paxton lived for seven years longer, planning public parks and cemeteries, a living demonstration of the value of Self-Help. But one may wonder whether all his virtues might not have flowered unseen, if his appearance had not chanced to strike the eye of a neurotic millionaire. And it is amusing to reflect that the Crystal Palace, which is now generally considered the first example of the modern style in architecture, owes its existence indirectly to a complex set up by a beauty painted by Gainsborough.

Miss Markham has shaped a mass of unused material into a most entertaining and stimulating book. RAYMOND MORTIMER

CROMWELL

Thomas Cromwell. By PETER WILDING. *Heinemann.* 15*s.*

Mr. Wilding's biography of Cromwell has been widely praised, but these eulogies seem to show that reviewers are easily satisfied by such qualities as clearness of statement and singleness of outlook particularly if the author has obviously read all the books on his subject. But the historical biographer has a more difficult task than to master what other people have written, to adopt a standpoint, and to prepare a brief; it is his function to build up, out of the miscellaneous facts which have been preserved, a living man, deducing the secret motives which led him to play the part he did. He must possess psychological insight into an exceptional character and imaginative sympathy to understand the men of a completely different age, whose minds grew up in an entirely different mould. The following quotations show Mr. Wilding's qualifications in these necessary respects :—

> God to him (Cromwell) was just a good idea; his prophet was Machiavelli; his Bible was the Prince. He was in fact as near to being an atheist as any man ever has been.
>
> . . . A Catholic (Henry VIII) and an atheist, then, combined to break away from the Church of Rome, and to found a new state religion. . . . It is remarkable that a Catholic and atheist should be able to work together for any purpose at all.

There is nothing whatever to show that Thomas Cromwell found the idea of a personal Deity incredible as many millions of us do to-day; there is every reason to suppose that he took His existence for granted and it would be astonishing if his outlook should have been different from everyone in the century in which he lived.

> Henry cast about him for a new wife and picked on Anne Boleyn with whom he was violently in love.

The sentence contradicts itself.

> If Cromwell had been allowed to have his own way and possessed unlimited power, he would probably have attempted to erect a theocracy in which the King should be identified with God and should be revered and worshipped in his dual capacity, similar to the system of the Aztecs. . . .

Would he indeed.

> Cromwell hated iconduly [?iconolatry] since it appeared to him to be an insult to the King for the people to worship images of any kind. . . .
>
> Even now Cromwell could scarcely come forward and tell his master that he had brought all his trouble upon himself owing to his dilly-dallying among sovereigns so much his superior not only in brain-power but also in the resources of their realms.

From the above passages it will be clear that we may dismiss this biography as crude work. Mr. Wilding has taken great pains to get up his brief, but his style reveals a slipshod immature mind singularly lacking in imaginative sympathy.

This is a great pity. For the Hammer of the Monks, even if he did not impose his ideas upon Henry as completely as Mr. Wilding believes, was an interesting example of the ruthless servant of the State and of that efficiency which is so disastrous to human happiness. D. G.

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Science. A New Outline. By J. W. N. SULLIVAN. *Nelson.* 5*s.*

How and why science developed in Western Europe many centuries after its foundations had been laid in the East is a problem whose solution is bound up with the whole social context of the West. When it did come it developed like a human being, with both head and hands. The head spun the theories by watching and guiding the hands; the hands performed the manipulation and the practice, but it was the kind of practice needed by the social institutions that supplied the hand and brain worker with food. Hence came scientific theories, scientific experiment, and scientific invention, the three blood-related offspring of Western Industrialism.

The latter half of the Victorian period saw the rise of science as a recognised factor in international competition, Germany and America leading the way in the assault on British supremacy in the world markets. Rather late Britain followed suit, and the windows of schools and colleges were prised open to allow the new scientific atmosphere to circulate in rooms unventilated since the Greek and Roman days. Technical Schools were established, Working Men's Colleges opened, Huxley's voice obediently boomed out defiance at the Bishops, as the next generation was unconsciously being prepared to fulfil its historic function of harnessing the findings of science to the competitive needs of industry.

Thus was born a new generation that found a new outlet for its inventive and romantic imagination in Jules Verne, the early scientific stories of H. G. Wells, and books galore on modern inventions, a title that can never grow old. Later, as science passed to the stage of specialised Division of Labour, its theories, especially its mathematical theories, became abstruse and incomprehensible to the outsider, and even to many of the scientists themselves, and the Romance of Science changed to the Mysteries of Science. In a trice the pulpits reverberated to the new scientific mysticism. The two books under review have to be seen against this background. Dr. A. M. Low is concerned with the manipulative and directly applicable field of science, the aspect of it that enters into the consciousness of the man in the street, and unwittingly

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Mr. Sullivan, as usual, is primarily concerned with the other side of science, the web of ideas that are woven together in logical form, and presented as the theoretical groundwork. When Mr. Sullivan eschews scientific philosphy and confines his great talents to scientific description, as he does here, he can hardly be excelled by any other living writer in this field. In this work not only does he bring us right up to the most recent advances in mathematical physics, without so much as a symbol to arouse our inferiority complexes, but he dives straight into a lucid and balanced description of the nature of life on this planet, the various forms in which it presents itself, and the multitude of ways in which each species succeeds in surviving. To have produced a book that is at once almost a textbook and an effort at scientific journalism, is to achieve the almost impossible. It makes fascinating reading.

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ARTIST AND CRAFTSMAN

The Young Joseph. By THOMAS MANN. Translated by H. T. LOWE-PORTER. *Secker.* 7s. 6d.

The Apple of Concord. By RICHARD CHURCH. *Dent.* 7s. 6d.

Thomas Mann is a writer whose personality is persuasive, and by persuasion dominant ; so that although the trilogy of which *The Young Joseph* is the second volume has the air of being conceived as a great work, there is nothing "powerful" in the writer's approach to cause a recoil in the sensitive reader. *The Young Joseph* covers the period of the presentation by Jacob to his favourite son of the coat of many colours, and the sale of Joseph to the Ishmaelites. It begins characteristically with a four-page dissertation on beauty, and the reader, howbeit grateful for this un-Teutonic brevity, is conscious of slight restiveness at this summary dealing with a subtle and complex subject. The restiveness endures through the first twenty-five pages, so that a tepid answer might be given should someone ask at that point what the book was "like." And yet, half unknown to the reader, rapport between him and the author has already been established: already he is listening, as Benjamin listened to Joseph, "to the thoughts between the words, to the tone and the rhythm of his speech, for he was vaguely possessed by the idea that so he might come upon his brother's secret thoughts, in solution in his words as salt is in solution in the sea." Thus, by the time that the traditional connection between Abraham and Eliezer, Jacob's "oldest servant" and Joseph's teacher, is given a chapter of examination, the reader is willing to co-operate fully, his intellectual twitchings are stilled, and that part of his understanding which is not intellectual is ready to accept the chief underlying note of the book, in this chapter made explicit :

> The sphere rolls ; never can it be certainly known where a story has its original home, whether in heaven or on earth. The truth is best served by the statement that it takes place simultaneously and concordantly both here and there, and only to our eyes does it appear that it came down and went up again. The story comes down, as a god becomes man, it becomes earthly, becomes *bourgeois* so to say. . . . [Stories] civilise themselves . . . without thereby ceasing to take place on high and be narratable in their celestial form.

This theme is illuminatingly developed when the little boy Benjamin questions Joseph about the yearly ritual of seeking for the body of Adonis, slain by the boar ; and by the relation, inherent in the whole book, between the Adonis myth and Joseph's own resurrection from the pit (from whose mouth, when Reuben sought him bent on rescue, the stone had been rolled away), and between both these and the Christian myth. There is nothing mushy in Herr Mann's mysticism : his is a highly intellectual as well as a highly intuitive mind, and it is the balance of these faculties which make him an artist. Like all artists, he is intensely interested in the story for its own sake ; and out of the story's "earthly" aspect he has drawn its "celestial" aspect by "the magic of the word, whereby the uppermost was turned undermost —an unforced and perfectly genuine use of language to work enchantment."

The success of *The Young Joseph*, since it is a psychological novel and not an allegory, rests of course chiefly on the way in which the characters are made convincing—are made to fill out their predestined pattern without offending either probability or the reader's life-long, if meagre, familiarity with them. The balance of sympathy between the insufferable but injured Joseph, and the injured but brutal step-brothers is admirably preserved : the reader is presented with a full and fascinating account of the situation, covert at first, during which Joseph's fatuous oblivion of their jealousy is magnificently rendered. So are his affection for Benjamin and his exploitation of charm in his filial relation. The only part of him in which I could not believe was his gift for trance and prophecy : his clever, egotistical, tactless make-up seemed to make wish-fulfilment a likelier cause of dreams than clairvoyance. The minor characters, particularly Napthali and Asher, are very well done in brief ; but there is a bad lapse over Benjamin, who is made, but not intended to be, a self-conscious child with the horrible habit of referring to himself as "this small urchin."

On the whole the translation is extremely good : the sentences are English sentences. But as the Cenci's lovely words, "Tie up my hair in any simple knot," are for women ruined by the addition of "And yours I see is coming down," with its sharp suggestion of Mrs. Micawber sluttishness, so for women the synonym "picture-robe" for the coat of many colours is most unfortunate ; for "picture dress" is in common use with them and has a precise

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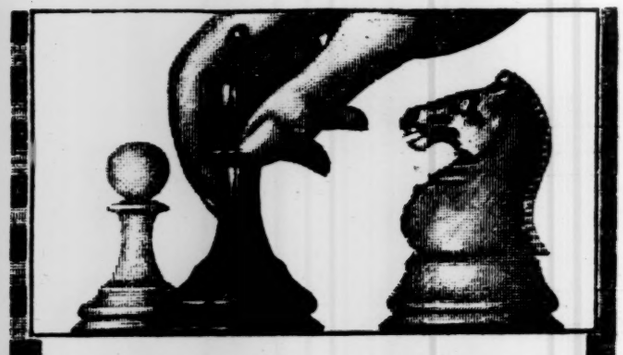
significance not consonant with ancient Hebrew costume. Such small things can jar unpleasantly, and a proof-reader of the opposite sex is always desirable.

Mr. Church has been and remains a puzzling case. His novels are unquestionably respect-worthy, being well-considered, quietly written, and concerned with situations of great potential interest. The young man in *High Summer* who married a girl because he was unconsciously in love with her mother; the "prodigal" father who gave another book its title; the architect suffering from *accidie* who is the hero of the present novel—these subjects are not the choice of a naive, but of a cultured, mind. And yet the impression made by these three books, both in retrospect and in the act of reading, is naive. It is not that Mr. Church is sentimental or over-enthusiastic: I find I can only express my dissatisfaction by saying that it is as though a superficially unemotional, intelligent and well-read, but perhaps rather narrowly educated, child were writing partly of things closely observed but only half comprehended, partly of things known by hearsay. The Americans living in Paris, and their French friends, of *The Apple of Concord*, have the air of being grouped to illustrate the thesis that the experimental, not to say casual, *amours* of rich, cultivated people, work on the whole marvellously well and make everybody very happy. This general rosiness is not modified by the painful incidents which occur as the story unfolds, because we are not touched by any of the characters' emotions, not even by Wade's *accidie* of which we hear so much. The only emotion which the reader is made to share is a feeling for the beauty of Paris and Saint Cloud in autumn. Can it be that Mr. Church is an artist only in his contact with "nature," that where human relations are concerned he tries to make observation and interest do what only imaginative identification could accomplish? His characters make life-like gestures; but the reader cannot contrive to care a button about them, and perhaps it is because their author did not care. He cares for ideas: the titles to the parts of the book make that clear; and he is a craftsman. But art lies the other side of a fissure, narrow perhaps, but deep, and before he can cross it Mr. Church will have to undergo some process analogous to that whereby his hero Wade shed his false values and emotional inhibitions, and escaped from *accidie* into a new life. Some such process is necessary if the fissure is to be crossed, and Mr. Church to join Herr Mann upon the fissure's other side.

E. B. C. JONES



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BIBLIOMANIA

New Paths in Book Collecting. Essays by Various Hands. Edited with an Introduction by JOHN CARTER. *Constable.* 10s.

This is a disappointing book. A few months ago its editor, Mr. John Carter, and Mr. Graham Pollard, one of his contributors, produced a work which, under the sober title of *An Enquiry into the Nature of Certain 19th Century Pamphlets*, not only created an exciting scandal in the book-collecting world, but also, and perhaps only incidentally, called attention to the futile attitude of mind which has come over that world within the last fifty years. It is probably true that this was not their object, and that their only end in view was to examine a number of nineteenth-century pamphlets, supposedly very rare, and prove them to be forgeries. However that may be, what emerges no less clearly from their narrative is a realisation of the utter unimportance of the pamphlets in question, and the really astonishing incompetence and gullibility of certain respected collectors and booksellers.

Now this wanted saying, and this book is disappointing chiefly because, instead of continuing that good work, it is content to assume that collecting is an end in itself and that all collecting is valuable. Of course, there is no harm in collecting matchboxes, stamps, trouser buttons, or anything else one pleases. Indeed, the virtue of such collections lies in the fact that their owners are not tempted to imagine them important. With books it is different. There are ways of collecting books which add definitely to our knowledge of literature and to textual criticism. There are others which produce good and pleasant libraries. And just because of this the collecting of books has become to be considered a serious occupation, when the collection of trouser buttons is agreed to be a harmless mania.

Moreover, there is that odour of the auction room, of scarcity value, which, to say the least of it, is not attractive. The "blurb" on the inside of the dust cover of this book is significant. This is how it runs:

> A few years ago the modest book collector felt that he was being crowded out by rich collectors; then, with the slump, the rich bibliophile vanished; the small collector was profoundly discouraged. But he and the new generation of would-be collectors who are growing up are only waiting for some one to suggest new lines of activity in order to become as busy as their predecessors.
>
> This book of Mr. Carter's offers an assortment of just such suggestions. Here are nine new themes for book-collecting, each with opportunities for personal exploration and design, no one concerned with items of great cost.
>
> Antiquarian book dealers will find in *New Paths in Book Collecting* new specialities in which to interest likely customers; private buyers will be able, with its help, to give new and absorbing direction to their book hunting.

The frankness of this "blurb" is in its way, of course, attractive. Nowhere is it suggested that the value of book-collecting may have something to do with the value, as literature, of the books you collect. Indeed, throughout the whole book there seems to be a suggestion that as all the first editions of good books are already so high in price, the only thing left to do is to collect the worthless books. Mr. Michael Sadleir writes amusingly on the charms of the yellow back novel. He admits that novels by George Augustus Sala, Edmund Yates, R. B. Brough, Augustus Mayhew, and Douglas Jerrold are perhaps the grandest "finds" one can expect to make among them. On the other hand, he tries hard to work up some enthusiasm for their really hideous covers. But it is clear that the real charm a yellow-back has for them is the fact that it is so cheap and badly made a book that it is a matter of the greatest difficulty to find one in a decent state.

So it is, with only two exceptions, all the way through the work. The books that are forced upon one's attention are books which are praised for every merit except one—the fact that anybody in his senses thinks them worth preserving. There are, as I have said, two exceptions. Mr. Muir makes a selection of war books that is interesting, and Mr. Pollard with a cruel logic insists that if what one wants is really a first edition, then it must often be sought for not within the covers of a book but among the loose and probably untidy pages of periodicals. The logic of this claim, both for the collector and the textual critic, is unassailable. But oh! one's poor shelves, and what a world to live in!

RALPH WRIGHT

SHORTER NOTICE

e Man Who Fooled A Continent. By F. W. HARLAND-EDGECUMBE. *Long.* 10s. 6d.

If Thackeray were alive he would enjoy telling the story of the rnalist who captured American society by posing as a lord. The ceptibility of the smart American to a title is not news; but, among e confidence tricksters who profited by this little weakness there can ve been few who enjoyed such a boom of popularity as Mr. Harland-gecumbe, who tells his own story in *The Man Who Fooled a Continent.* The gay Lord Dupree" became the darling of Hollywood and the ss as well as of the fashionable "Four Hundred" into whom he rried. Unfortunately, Mr. Harland-Edgecumbe's persuasiveness s him when it comes to writing. He achieves neither satire nor fession, only a naive wonder at his success which never becomes rsonal and interesting. His vainglory expresses itself chiefly in a ade of the names of his captives; his attempt to justify himself as a er falls peculiarly flat, since the exquisitely gowned women whose ours he enjoyed, including his wife, might have been exactly alike all the discrimination he shows. There may be English snobs who l appreciate a sneer at the gullibility of their American brothers; re are simple souls, no doubt, who will swallow any account of ama parties, stocking game and other diversions of wealth and nion, if it be garnished with living names. But in general, *The Man o Fooled a Continent* is a lamentable waste of good material; for ve, characterisation and genuine entertainment, it is nowhere in the ning with *Juan in America.*

Veek-end Competitions

No. 265

t by Eric Partridge

I am writing a book on slang and should be glad of readers' stance. English is often maligned as "Slango-Saxon," our language as "slanguage": but actually there are—or I think re are—professions and sections of life which are deficient in, ner than overladen with, slang. In view of this imputation of emia, readers might be glad to prove me wrong by selecting t they consider to be the *five* most forcible or, alternatively, five most apposite terms and/or phrases in any *three* of these ups:

(1) Local Government;
(2) Politics;
(3) Economics and Sociology;
(4) Teaching (pupils' slang is barred);
(5) Accountancy, and, if desired, Insurance;
(6) Real-Estate Agency and, if desired, Building Societies;
(7) Advertising;
(8) Publishing;
(9) Typing and/or Shorthand;
(10) Motoring;
(11) Cruising.

nly terms and phrases current in this our century are admissible. accurate dating of new expressions, like the effective ymology" of anything quaint, *might* turn the scales of justice; uresqueness and suitability of the selected terms and adequacy lefinition are, however, the primary requisites.

We offer a First Prize of Two Guineas and a Second Prize of Half a Guinea for the best entries.

RULES—

1. Envelopes should be marked with the number of the Problem, in the top left-hand corner, and should be addressed to COMPETITIONS, 10 Great Turnstile, High Holborn, W.C.1. Solutions must reach the Editor by first post on Thursday, April 18.

2. Competitors may use a pseudonym. Typescript is not insisted on, but writing must be on one side of the paper only.

3. The Editor's decision is final. He reserves the right to print in part or as a whole any matter sent in, whether it be awarded a prize or not. MSS. cannot be returned. When no entries reach the required standard no prize will be awarded.

4. No competitor is eligible for more than one prize in any one week.

The result of last week's competition will be announced in our next issue.

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 263

Set by Martin Armstrong

Owing, no doubt, to the machinations of Teetotallers and Puritans, wine is often referred to as alcohol, but tea is never called theine, caffeine or tannin. If you accuse a man of alcoholism he will probably knock you down: if you accuse him of theism ("a morbid state resulting from too much tea-drinking") he will probably not know what you mean.

We offer a First Prize of Two Guineas and a Second Prize of Half a Guinea for a diatribe (not exceeding 200 words) by the Reverend Doctor Folliott (in Peacock's *Crotchet Castle*) on this unwarrantable state of things.

Report by Martin Armstrong

The parodist of Dr. Folliott is beset by two pitfalls. He may fail to realise in the first place that eloquence is the very antithesis of verbosity, and the Doctor is never verbose; in the second, that Dr. Folliott's personality consists not only in folliottic phraseology, but equally in folliottic rhythm. The entries, as befits Peacock, were few and select. The best, all considered, is that of J. J., which I recommend for First Prize. For Second Prize, William Bliss and Scholastikos ran neck and neck, and I solved the dilemma by tossing up, with the result that William Bliss gets it. Scholastikos's version is appended for the enjoyment of the discriminating, though I would point out that *Arcades ambo* in its context is better sound than sense, and that, if a tea-addict is a theist, a coffee-addict is surely a caffeist and not a caffeinist.

FIRST PRIZE

God bless my soul, sir, exclaimed the Reverend Dr. Folliott, I am out of all patience with this incessant prating of Alcoholism. It but betrays the slack and sluggish temper of the modern rabble of mankind, which is now grown tame and torpid from continuous imbibing of a toxic sedative. I do not hold by it, sir. I care not a kidney bean (or any other nutritious and leguminacious vegetable) for your tea-drinker. Why must he be suffered to thrust opprobrious epithets at the sublimest conceptions of the human mind?—I will trouble you for an anchovy, sir.—What of the Greeks? Is the clear purity of their writing to be animadverted on as a product of alcoholism? The Iliad is none of your temperance tracts. It was not written on tea, and among total abstainers you may seek in vain for Homer, concerning whom we have an apt commentary, *Nunquam nisi potus.* Moreover if our sweet Flaccus by the crystal spring of Bandusia, had despised his age-old (alcoholic) Chian or Falernian, and had called rather for a pot of fresh (Indian or China) tea, his monument would have been no more durable than a cabbage leaf, and his verses only proper as a wrapping for mackerel. If the Bacchic thyrsus had changed rivers into tea, if the Bacchanalian frenzy

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had been dulled with this rough savourless soporific, would the cry of Euhoe have echoed down the ages? I hold that the common mass, the ignobile vulgus, is steeped and soaked in this vile somniferent beverage to its uttermost stultification. I must drown my abhorrence of their degeneracy in a glass of Sauterne. J. J.

SECOND PRIZE

Dr. Morbific: They say (*looking fixedly at Dr. Folliott*) that after forty a man is either a fool or a physician. He! He!

Dr. Folliott: That remark has always seemed to me to ignore a third possibility—a *tertium quid*.

Dr. Morbific: And what is that?

Dr. Folliott (*looking fixedly at Dr. Morbific*): He may very well be *both*. Ha! Ha!

Dr. Morbific: Sir, if you mean to be insulting. . . .

Dr. Folliott: Sir, it was not I who first attempted to be epideictic. You accuse me of drinking alcohol and insinuate that I drink in order to intoxicate myself.

Why is it that you pharisaical gentlemen because you reject the gifts of the Almighty must insult others, and the Deity himself, by misnaming them? Do I, when you choose to swill down your decoctions of a Chinese herb or an Arabian berry tell you that you are drinking Theine or Caffeine—the sublimated essences of these Eastern drugs? (*Holding up his glass*): What proportion of alcohol does this glass of claret contain? Is it the only property of wine that, if over-indulged in, it may intoxicate? Look at the colour of this claret. The mines of Golconda can show no such rubies. . . . WILLIAM BLISS

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Mrs. Chainmail: But, Doctor, I cannot approve of alcoholism.

The Rev. Dr. Folliott: Alcoholism, madam! And what signifies alcoholism? The Greeks had no such word. The moderns have invented that bastard nomenclature to describe a delectation in the choicest gifts of the Creator. I drink Madeira, Hock, Champagne, Vin de Graves, Sauterne, Hermitage, in the course of one repast. Why not? Wine was meant for drinking. But my neighbour, Mr. Pussyfoot, swills tea and coffee at all hours of the day and night. Between the degustation of an excellent breakfast and a noble dinner, he must have "morning coffee." Shall I accuse him of caffeinism? And tea! Tea! That pernicious liquor which annihilates his digestion. He must drink tea at whatever hour he desires. Madam, he is an addict to theism. I demand that the caffeinist and the theist be execrated together. *Arcades ambo*. If they must drink poison, I leave them to their nauseous decoctions. Let me dine with Lyaeus. *Drunk with tea*, says our modern Socrates, and he speaks with his usual wisdom. SCHOLASTIKOS

CALIBAN'S PROBLEM CONTEST

PROBLEM 120.—A POSER FROM JOAN

"Still keen on arithmetic, Joan?" I asked. She's the youngest of the family, but, definitely, the brightest.

"Yes, I'm still keen," said Joan. "D'you remember that problem you set me, last time you came here?"

"Why, no," said I. "No, I don't."

"I do," said Joan. "I had to find the product of our ages and then add their sum. You put it in simpler words, though—I forget exactly how."

I laughed. "That wouldn't present much difficulty now."

"No, it wouldn't, would it?" said Joan. "Though the total now would be a good bit bigger. It would be—let me see—1,729 more than when you first set your problem."

How old is Joan?

PROBLEM 118.—BY THEIR FRUITS YE SHALL KNOW THEM

One can make practically any of the data one's starting-point. The chain of inference—even at its shortest—is too long to set out here in detail, but it is easily deduced that:

Mr. Currant grows peaches,
Mr. Raspberry grows apples,
Mr. Pear grows currants,
Mr. Gooseberry grows apricots,
Mr. Apple grows pears.
Mr. Apricot grows raspberries, and
Mr. Peach grows gooseberries.

PROBLEM 117.—TRIANGULAR TEST

A set of Low's cartoons goes to: Hugh Gardner, 58 Kingsley Court, Park Avenue, London, N.W.2.

Nine points are awarded.

PRIZES FOR PROBLEM SOLVERS

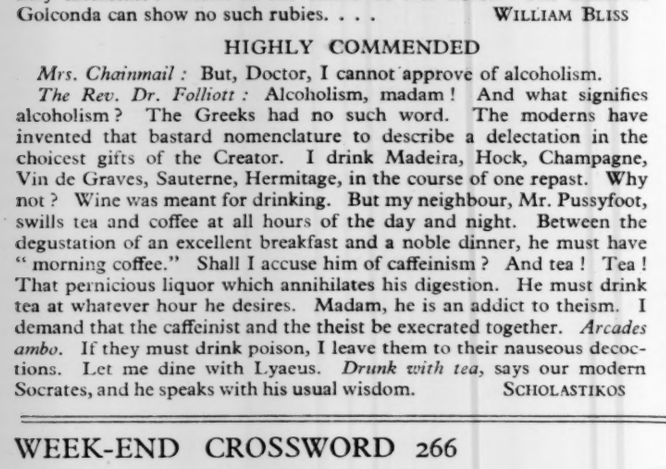
A set of Low's cartoons is awarded to the sender of a correct solution selected at random.

In addition, a record is kept of correct solutions sent, and of the points scored weekly by solvers. On attaining 100 points a solver is entitled to a prize consisting of any book (or books) reviewed or advertised in these columns, of a value not greater than 10*s*. Solvers who have won a prize on this basis are eligible for a second prize on attaining a further 120 points, and for a third prize on attaining a further 150. Solutions must be addressed to CALIBAN, c/o the Editor, and must reach this office not later than Tuesday week following publication of the problem. Solutions to two problems may be sent in one envelope, but on separate sheets of paper.

Some indication should be given of the method of solution. CALIBAN

WEEK-END CROSSWORD 266

The sender of the first correct solution to be opened may choose as prize a copy of either *This England* or *The Playtime Omnibus*. Envelopes should be addressed to "CROSSWORDS," 10 Great Turnstile, High Holborn, W.C.1, and must arrive not later than first post next Wednesday.



Set by L.-S.

The last week's winner is
Miss I. C. Wilson, 18 College Crescent, N.W.3

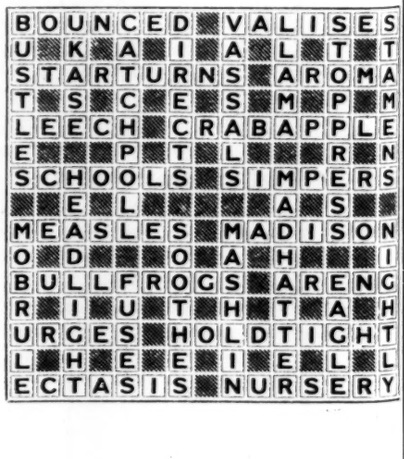
ACROSS.

1. You should not have the cold shoulder given you on it.
5. Make even a white face look black.
9. Send the pill back, it's got sand mixed up in it.
10. Knitter who sends one head over heels?
11. A tea toper in a dramatic little show.
12. He evidently didn't go to sleep during the sermon.
14. Suggests an anatomical encounter at Saul's city.
18. To - morrow's anachronism.
22. You disturb Carlo visibly.
23. Does one impel it with an air shot?
24. Have these "foresters" reached a green old age?
25. No doubt the sort of ring the engaged young man goes in for.
26. Such a step gets one mounted.
27. Gambler's accidental oath perhaps.

DOWN.

1. How to keep a tight grip on things.
2. At length the horses pulled it.
3. Beaten and tied up.
4. Unlucky to-day.
6. There's a gigantic one in Ireland.
7. Savage got up as a flower.
8. Common cause of highbrows.
13. To-morrow is not the time for those who read between the lines handily.
15. The old devil comes to a godly end.
16. Inwardly burn.
17. A couple in a rush?
19. In such thought he stood by the Tumtum tree.
20. Basket produced in a bog.
21. There was a great fire after it.

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD


BOUNCED VALISES
UKA I A L T T
STARTURNS AROMA
T S C E S M P M
LEECH CRABAPPLE
E P T L R N
SCHOOLS SIMPERS
E L A S
MEASLES MADISON
O D O A H I
BULLFROGS ARENG
R I U T H T A H
URGES HOLDTIGHT
L H E E I E L L
ECTASIS NURSERY

London Amusements

MATINEES

All at 2.30 p.m. unless otherwise stated.

YCH. The Dominant Sex. Wed., S.
.O. Hyde Park Corner. Wed. & Sat.
EUM. Variety. Sat.
DY. The Beggar's Opera. Tues. & Sat.
ESS. Cornelius. Wed., Sat. & Easter M.
K'S. 'And a Woman Passed By.' W.S.
DROME. Yes, Madam? Sat.
HX. "Family Affairs." Thurs., Sat.
I'S. Wind & the Rain. Wed. & Sat.
TY. "Frolic Wind." Th., Sat.
RTIN'S. Man of Yesterday. Tu., Fri.
. The Aunt of England. Th. & Sat.
HALL. Viceroy Sarah. Tues. & Sat.

THEATRES

YCH. Tem. 6404.
Mats., Wed., Sat., & Mon., April 22nd, 2.30.
THE DOMINANT SEX.
By Michael Egan.

O. (Ger. 2663). 8.30. Wed., Sat. 2.30.
PARK CORNER, by Walter Hackett.
N LORNE. GODFREY TEARLE.
ON HARKER. J. H. ROBERTS.

DY. 8.30. TUES., SAT., 2.30. Whi. 2578.
E BEGGAR'S OPERA.
"A Lovely Show."—*Daily Sketch.*

ESS. Catherine St., W.C.2. Tem. 8243.
30. Mats., Wed., Sat., & Easter Mon., 2.30.
RALPH RICHARDSON in
RNELIUS, by J. B. PRIESTLEY.

OF YORK'S. Temple Bar 5122.
vgs., 8.30. Mats., Wed. & Sat., 2.30.
. And a Woman Passed By.'
LEEN O'REGAN and ION SWINLEY.

. Ger. 1592. Evenings. 8.30.
8th & 19th. Mats., Easter Mon. & April 25th.
OWEN NARES,
ADELE DIXON KAY HAMMOND in
YOUTH AT THE HELM.

DROME. 8.15. Mat., Sat., 2.30. (Ger. 3272).
BBY HOWES & BINNIE HALE in
"YES, MADAM?"
Holy Week. Reopens April 20 at 8.15.

IX. 8.30. Thurs., Sat., 2.30. Tem. 8611.
LILIAN BRAITHWAITE in
FAMILY AFFAIRS."

'S THEATRE. (Ger. 4517).
, 8.30. Wed., Sat. & Easter Mon., 2.30.
E WIND AND THE RAIN.
n's Longest Run. Now in its 2nd Year.

TY. (Gerrard 7331).
gs 8.30. Matinees, Thurs. & Sats., 2.30.
OLIC WIND," by RICHARD PRYCE.
Based on Novel by Richard Oke.

IES'. Whi. 3903. 8.30. Wed., Thurs., 2.30.
rs COOPER & RAYMOND MASSEY present
E THINGS HAPPEN AT SEA,
Farcical Comedy by KEITH WINTER.
NE ARNAUD with FRANK LAWTON.

RTIN'S THEATRE. (Tem. 1443).
ngs, 8.30. Matinees, Tues. & Fri., 2.30.
LESLIE BANKS in
MAN OF YESTERDAY.

Evgs., 8.30. Mats., Thurs., Sat., 2.30.
HAIDÉE WRIGHT in
AUNT OF ENGLAND."

INSTER, Palace St., S.W.1. (Vic. 0283).
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NING WITH A NEW PRODUCTION
ON APRIL 23rd.

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VICEROY SARAH.

WYNDHAM'S. Temple Bar 3028.
Box Office Open.
DIANA WYNYARD in
SWEET ALOES, by Jay Mallory.
Run suspended until Mon., April 29.

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"LAC AUX DAMES" (A)
(Martin's Summer) with Simone Simon, and Viennese Prize Film "*ZERBROCHENE KRUG*" (U).

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Monday, April 15th,
LE 14 JUILLET.
Thursday, April 18th,
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CROYDON Repertory.
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HARROGATE White Rose Players.
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LIVERPOOL Repertory.
Evenings 7.45. Mat., Sat., 2.30.
The Flowers of the Forest.
By John Van Druten.

MANCHESTER Repertory.
Evenings 7.30.
Exodus. By H. F. Rubinstein and Halcott Glover.

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Evenings 6.30 & 8.50.
The Private Secretary. By Charles Hawtrey.

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THE WEEK IN THE CITY

By TOREADOR

GILT-EDGED AND THE BUDGET—GOLD RESERVES AND STABILISATION —OIL SHARES—RUBBER SHARES AND DEVALUATION OF THE GUILDER

My colleague in crime, the City Editor of the *Times*, is supposed now to be inspired not only by the Governor of the Bank of England, but by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. His paragraph on Monday on behalf of the surtax payer was seriously read as an expression of Mr. Neville Chamberlain's thoughts. Indeed, he virtually hinted that 6*d*. off the income tax was part of the Chancellor's programme for effecting certain conversion operations. The favourable impression which this paragraph created in the market was cleverly nurtured by the *Times* photographer, who caught Mr. Chamberlain at his Treasury desk on the following day fingering his budget papers with a rare benevolent smile. I do not suppose that the City Editor of the *Times* had seen even the outside of the Chancellor's door or that the photographer had troubled to interrogate the Treasury doorkeeper about the Chancellor's mental and physical condition, but the paragraph coincided with the market realisation that if Mr. Chamberlain allowed himself to make an optimistic forecast of next year's yield from the income tax, he would have a margin for making the "6*d*. off" concession. Personally, I distrust the ingratiating look upon the Chancellor's face, but it is not impossible that the Treasury authorities are advising him that to prevent a decline in domestic trade money must be cheapened still further. They may be arguing as follows: (*a*) the immediate prospects of a revival in international trade are not favourable; (*b*) the British trade recovery has so far been carried forward on the back of the building boom; (*c*) speculative or private building has probably reached its peak—the building societies, significantly, have decided to reduce their borrowing charges by ½ per cent.—and if the building of workers' houses under the auspices of the local authorities is to fill the gap, some encouragement must be given by way of cheaper long-term borrowing. A conversion of 3 per cent. Local Loans would give the lead to the market. At the same time open-market operations by the Bank would be essential to offset the deflationary, "play-for-safety" and "sit-on-cash" attitude which is now being adopted by the business man who is fearful of the coming general elections. This brings me again to my recent argument that although the long-term rate of interest is already too low to cover the political risk premium, the state of economic emergency may force it still lower. It is a damned perplexing situation for every investor.

* * *

A friendly critic agrees that stabilisation on gold would provoke another economic crisis in the course of years, but asks whether I seriously believe that the nations will refuse to return to gold on the basis, say, of a 50 per cent. devaluation (*i.e.*, writing up the price of gold by 100 per cent.). Certainly I do not believe that the world is yet ready to abolish an international gold standard. The "vested" interest in gold is strong and is increasing outside the British Empire. This is shown by the table of gold production which the Union Corporation gave in their recent report:

WORLD GOLD PRODUCTION
(In Millions of Fine Ounce)

	1929.	1930.	1931.	1932.	1933.	1934.
S. Africa	10.4	10.7	10.9	11.5	11.0	10.5
U.S.S.R.	1.1	1.4	1.7	2.0	2.8	4.2
Canada	1.9	2.1	2.7	3.0	2.9	2.9
U.S.A.	2.0	2.1	2.2	2.2	2.3	2.6
Australasia ..	0.6	0.6	0.8	.09	1.1	1.2
World total ..	19.6	20.8	22.4	24.3	25.6	27.4
British Empire, % of total	72.0	70.2	69.6	69.4	64.8	59.2
S. Africa, % of total	53.2	51.4	48.6	47.5	43.0	38.2

The increasing gold production of Russia will no doubt be deplored by Socialists who are working for monetary reform.

* * *

The Union Corporation directors proceed to argue that the possibility of restoring an international gold standard has been brought considerably nearer because only eight of the fifty more important countries operating the gold standard in 1929 remain with their currency more or less freely convertible into gold at the old parity while twelve are on a purely nominal and ineffective gold standard and no less than thirty have either abandoned the gold standard altogether or have devalued their currencies to a lower level. At the end of 1928 the monetary gold stock of the world (excluding Russian) were valued at £2,276 millions at the old statutory price. Assuming that the thirty countries relink their currencies to gold at an average of 40 per cent. below the old parity (their existing depreciation is 43 per cent.) the world's monetary gold stocks at the end of 1934 would be valued at £4,035 millions—an increase of 77 per cent. over 1928. If the remaining twenty countries also abandoned their present parities and relinked to gold at a similar level the value would be £4,77 millions—an increase of 110 per cent. Any fears regarding a shortage of gold for the next generation at least—so argue the directors of the Union Corporation—can be safely dismissed and the maldistribution of monetary gold reserves should not present any serious problem. Undoubtedly this is the argument which will bring the nations back to the gold standard. Nevertheless the Union Corporation have not allowed sufficiently for the following facts: (*a*) that of the thirty countries a number, following Great Britain, have operated an exchange system (in the "sterling" area) without the use of gold at all and that the longer this system works successfully, the more the gold standard is, to put it vulgarly, "debunked"; (*b*) that the maldistribution of gold may remain a serious problem; and (*c*) that any socialistically minded Government which intended to embark upon a reconstruction of its domestic economy, would have to sever connection with the gold system outside before it could hope to raise the standard of living of its people. That is why I prefer stabilisation in sterling.

* * *

The oil share market has again been active with rumours of a rise in the price of petrol and an increase in the dividends of Shell Transport and Venezuelan Oil Concessions. I have always suspected that the oil share market goes up and down to suit the dealers' books, but there is some justification to-day for expecting a rise in the price of American gasoline which will be the signal for a rise in the price of British petrol. The amended oil legislation which was passed by Congress at the end of February enabled the Federal Government to re-establish the Federal Tender Board in Texas for the purpose of licensing shipments of oil, *i.e.*, refusing licences to the merchants of "hot" oil. The output of "hot" oil has been reduced from 46,000 barrels a day to 26,000 barrels a day and as a result the export prices of gasoline have recovered to the levels ruling at the end of last year (about 5 cents per U.S. gallon). When the summer consumption begins to eat into stocks further rises should be seen, and I fully expect having to pay 2*d*. more for my petrol before the end of the summer. The long term outlook for oil shares is undoubtedly more favourable. Consumption continues to increase and yet no new oilfield of major importance has been discovered in America for the past three years. This may be encouraging buyers of Shell Transport ordinary shares, but I would be surprised to see an increase in the Shell dividend for 1934. Further, the competition of American "hot" oil in India will probably induce the directors of Burmah Oil to be conservative in their 1934 dividend distribution. An increase in the Venezuelan Oil Concessions dividend from 10 per cent. to 12½ per cent., as I indicated on March 16th, is a more reasonable forecast.

	Price.	Gross Yield %.
Shell Transport and Trading, £1	2¾	£3 10 3 7½% net
Venezuelan Oil Concessions, £1	2 3/16	£5 14 3 12½%
Burmah Oil Ordinary Stock ..	3⅞	£4 8 3 15%

* * *

The Dutch Government is making itself ridiculous by raising bank rate from 2½ per cent. to 4½ per cent. "to stem the loss of gold." Such measures will merely quicken the flight of capital. The devaluation of the belga has dislocated Dutch trade with Belgium and has struck a severe blow at the port of Rotterdam which can no longer compete with Antwerp. Clearly, Holland is not in the position to stand a fresh deflation. The devaluation of the guilder is only a matter of time. Holders of Malayan and Ceylon rubber shares should therefore be reconsidering their position. Devaluation of the guilder may bring about a fall in the sterling price of rubber, for the pressure to increase production among the Dutch native growers will become all the stronger. The restriction scheme even may be called into question. Now it is not the producers in Malaya and Ceylon who can withstand a fall in the sterling price of rubber. Producers in the Dutch East Indies, thanks to cheap and abundant labour, have succeeded in reducing their costs below those of companies in Malaya and Ceylon. Investors, on the long view, will find it safer to hold the shares of British companies operating in Netherlands India.

Company Meeting

NORWICH UNION LIFE INSURANCE SOCIETY

One Hundred and Twenty-seventh Annual General Meeting of ch Union Life Insurance Society was held on Tuesday at Norwich, he President, Mr. Michael Falcon said (in part):

new business total of £10,172,142 for 1934 exceeds by no less 1,238,176 the corresponding amount for 1933. It seems clear e benefits of life insurance are becoming more generally recog- but this in itself does not, to my mind, adequately explain our nenal success. Possibly the severe contraction in the yields ible from other forms of investment has been a contributing However this may be, it is eminently satisfactory that 1934 have seen us pass for the first time in our history the 10 million

e again we have to report a favourable mortality experience. The by death during the year were only 67 per cent. of the sum ed, according to the tables used in the calculation of our reserves, he balance of 33 per cent., which may be regarded as suspended or postponed mortality, remains in force to make its contribution to the general profit in future years. In point of fact, the actual number of policies comprising these claims were 16 fewer than in 1933, but their average amount assured was larger, which feature had the effect of increasing the total to £1,025,198. The claims by survivance are £286,735 higher at £1,614,270, but these do not, of course, involve any element of loss, since they were known to be upon the point of falling due for payment and were fully provided for by the premiums received. It is regrettable that we should lose touch with the holders of 3,873 policies in this manner, but by way of consolation it must be admitted that these maturities have tended to mitigate somewhat the difficulties of the present financial situation.

With the falling interest yield upon first-class securities, it has indeed been an arduous task to secure outlets for our surplus current income which return even a moderately attractive rate of interest and which, at the same time, provide reasonable prospects of avoiding future capital depreciation. The measure of our success can be judged from the average rate of interest earned upon the mean fund, which, you were possibly surprised to see from our report, amounted to £4 11s. 10d. per cent., after allowing for income-tax, and was only 7d. per cent. less than last year.

The report and accounts were adopted.

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